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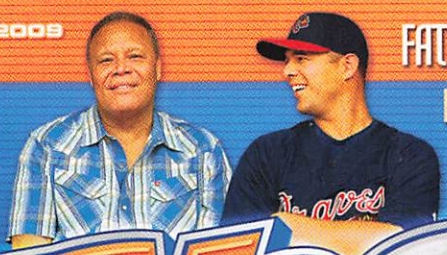

FATHER'S DAY SPECIAL

Players Pay Tribute To Their Dads

ChopTalk

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

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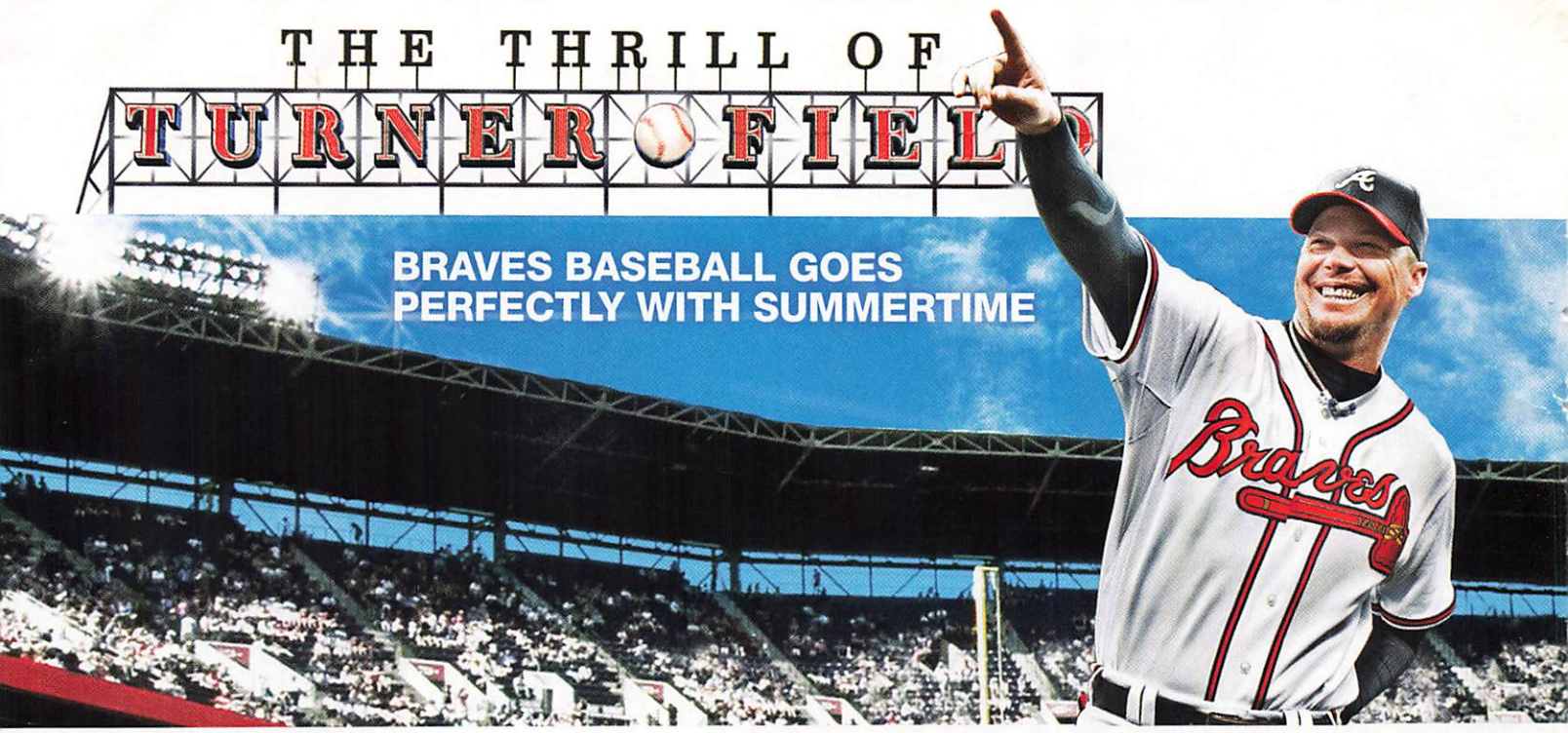

JUNE

2 TUESDAY 7:00 PM — CHICAGO CUBS
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Buy One Get One FREE Upper Reserved tickets*

3 WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM — CHICAGO CUBS
2-for-1 Wednesday Discount
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4 THURSDAY 7:00 PM — CHICAGO CUBS
College, Military & AAA Discounts
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5 FRIDAY 7:30 PM — MILWAUKEE BREWERS
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Spectacular post-game fireworks display
Prostrate Awareness Night

6 SATURDAY 7:00 PM — MILWAUKEE BREWERS
Baseball 101
Presented by Publix

7 SUNDAY 1:30 PM — MILWAUKEE BREWERS
Brian McCann Bat Giveaway
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Ultimate Kid's Day & All-Star Sunday

8 MONDAY 7:00 PM — PITTSBURGH PIRATES
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9 TUESDAY 7:00 PM — PITTSBURGH PIRATES
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30 TUESDAY 7:00 PM — PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES
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JULY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13-15	16	17	18
PHI	PHI	@WAS	@WAS	@WAS	@CHI	@CHI	@CHI	@COL	@COL	@COL	@COL	ALL STAR GAME	NYM	NYM	NYM
7:00pm	7:00pm	6:30pm	1:00pm	1:30pm	8:00pm	8:00pm	2:00pm	8:30pm	9:00pm	8:00pm	3:00pm	ST. LOUIS	7:00pm	7:30pm	4:00pm
WED PTV	THU SS	FRI SS	SAT SS	SUN FSS	MON ESPN	TUE SS	WED SS	THU SS	FRI SS	SAT SS	SUN FSS		THU SS	FRI PTV	SAT FOX

19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
NYM	SF	SF	SF	SF	@MIL	@MIL	@MIL		@FLA	@FLA	@FLA	LAD
6:00pm	7:00pm	7:00pm	7:00pm	1:00pm	8:00pm	7:00pm	2:00pm		7:00pm	7:00pm	7:00pm	7:30pm
SUN ESPN	MON SS	TUE PTV	WED PTV	THU SS	FRI SS	SAT SS	SUN FSS	MON	TUE SS	WED SS	THU SS	FRI PTV

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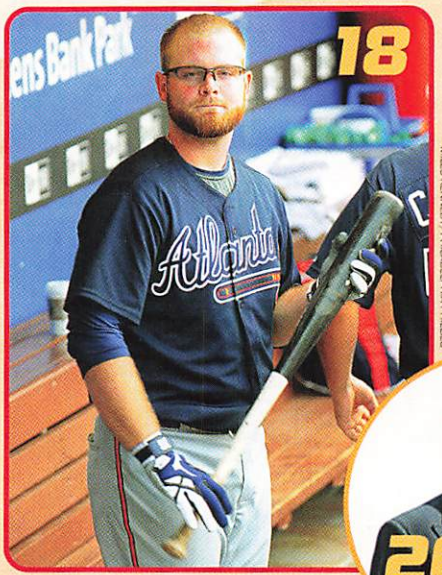
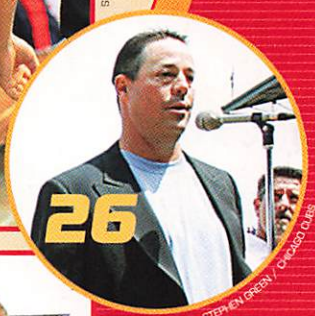


MILES KENNEDY/PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES



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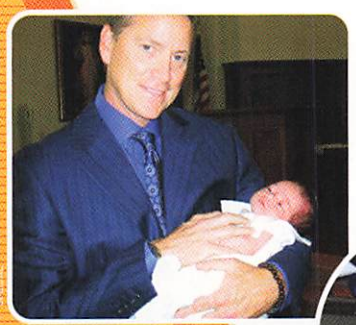

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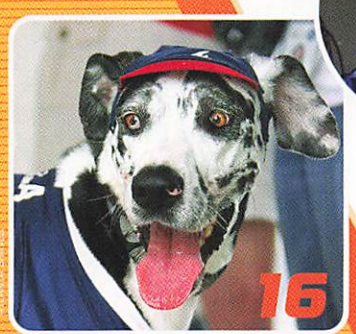

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CHOPTALK USPS Periodicals Publication 022-732; ISSN 1555-1547 is published monthly for $37.95 per year ($56.95 Canada and Mexico; $76.95 other international; payment in U.S. dollars only) by Wonderdog Publishing, Inc.

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Office of publication is located at 12829 Trinity Dr., Stafford, Tex. 77477-4214. Visit Braves.com/ChopTalk. E-mail Letters@ChopTalkonline.com. This is the Official Monthly Magazine of the Atlanta Braves. Single copy price is $4.99. Periodical postage paid at Stafford, Tex., and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes and returns to: ChopTalk, P.O. Box 80750, Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750.

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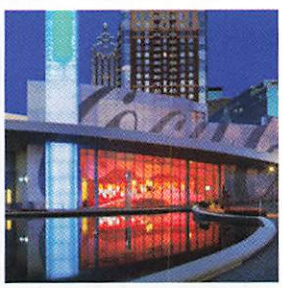

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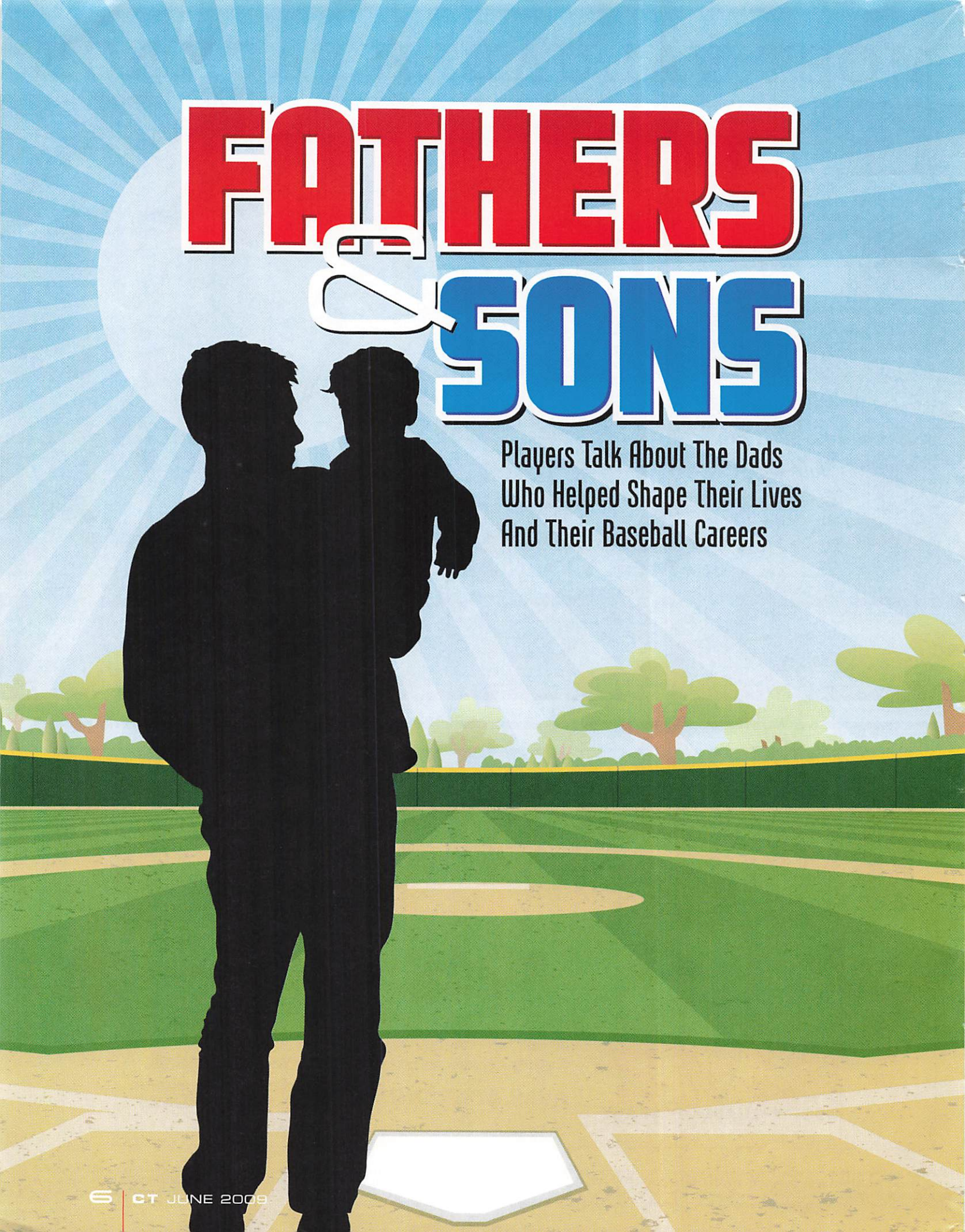


FATHERS & SONS

Players Talk About The Dads Who Helped Shape Their Lives And Their Baseball Careers

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

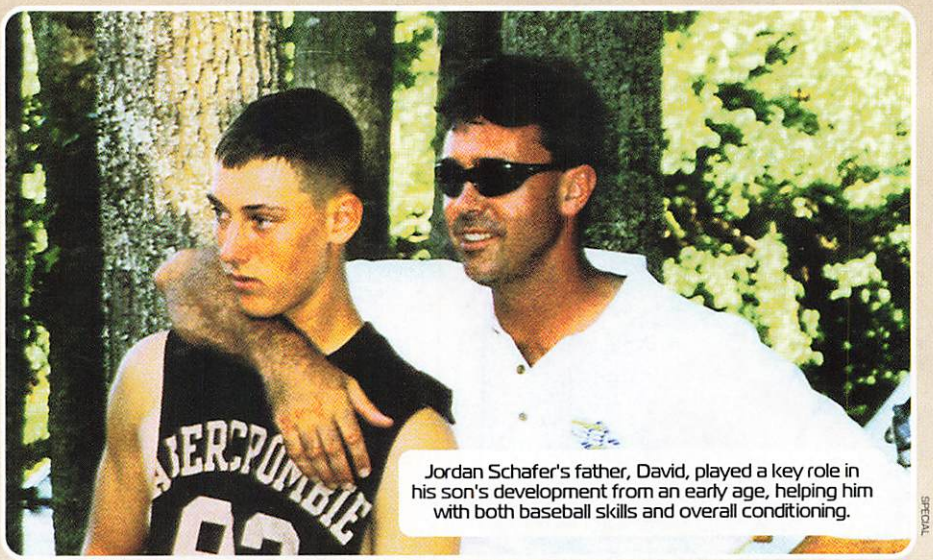
ROOKIE CENTERFIELDER Jordan Schafer experienced a once-in-a-lifetime thrill on April 5 when he became the 99th player in major league history to hit a home run in his first career at-bat. The moment was made even sweeter for Schafer by knowing that his father, David, was sitting in the stands at Philadelphia's Citizen's Bank Park.

With Father's Day approaching, Schafer, 22, is among the Braves who shared stories of their dads' impact on their lives and on their baseball careers.

"I saw my dad right after the game," Schafer said. "He got kind of teary. It was awesome just to be able to give him a big hug and share that moment. He's always been there for me, through all the good times and through all the stuff that happened last year."

The "stuff" Schafer referred to was the 50-game suspension in 2008 for violating baseball's performance-enhancing substance policy. His voice became quietly intense when he remembered calling his father last April to give him the suspension news.

"He let me know he was 100 percent in my corner," said Schafer. "He was supportive of me and reminded me that I wasn't always going to have an easy time in life. There will be rough patches, and I have to be mentally strong. It will make you a better person on the other side of it. For him to be there, to be supportive and not get down on me, meant everything."



Jordan Schafer's father, David, played a key role in his son's development from an early age, helping him with both baseball skills and overall conditioning.

SPECIAL

A successful businessman, David Schafer was instrumental in guiding his son's physical training from an early age.

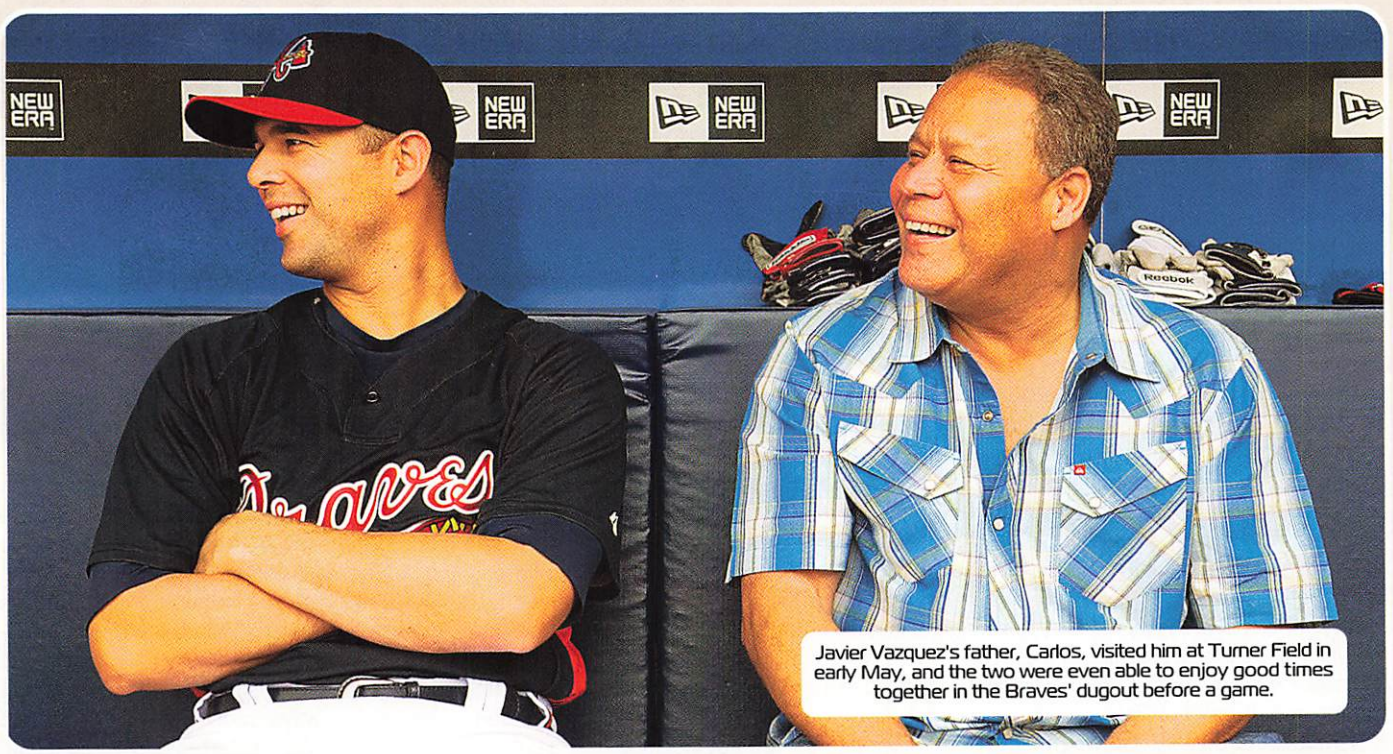
"He's a goal-driven guy," said Schafer of his father. "He's taken a lot of pride in trying to help me do what I want to do."

David researched unique training methods and even found Jody Johnson, the trainer in Tampa who helps develop Schafer's off-season workouts.

"He (his father) pushed me early on until I caught on and realized I needed to push myself," said Schafer. "He's a reference point for me, someone I can always go back to."

Normally reserved, Javier Vazquez smiled broadly when asked whether he'd done something as a kid that he didn't want his father, Carlos, to know about.

"I was in a private school in Puerto Rico, and I played volleyball and basketball in middle school and into high school," said Vazquez, chuckling. "We were getting beat a lot at that school."



Javier Vazquez's father, Carlos, visited him at Turner Field in early May, and the two were even able to enjoy good times together in the Braves' dugout before a game.

ATLANTA BRAVES

PATTY RASMUSSEN

Mike Gonzalez has a close relationship with his father, Mike, and says he's patterned himself after his dad in many ways.

He asked his parents if he could transfer to a different school, and when they asked why, he said he wanted to be with friends. His parents allowed him to transfer. Now Vazquez laughed harder.

"Just a couple years ago, I finally told my parents the reason I wanted to transfer was because I was tired of losing in basketball and volleyball," he said. "I'm 33 this year (July 25), so I was about 30 when I told him."

And what was his dad's reaction?

"He laughed," Vazquez said. "My relationship with my dad is very good. And it's not any different than anyone else's. Some people think because we play baseball or because they watch us on television, somehow our relationships are different, but they're not."

Like many other young boys, Vazquez learned life lessons, teamwork, hard work and perseverance, through baseball. And his introduction to the game that's become his profession came through his father who taught him the fundamentals during his childhood in Ponce, Puerto Rico, where he still lives in the off-season with his family, wife Kamille, daughters Kamila (5) and Karinana (1), and son, Javier Josue (4).

Carlos worked in the oil industry and as a manager at Seahorse, supplying diesel fuel and other marine supplies to the big ships coming into the port at Ponce.

"I was about 3 years old when I started playing and hitting," said Vazquez. "I remember being in elementary school, he'd come home from work and I'd say, "C'mon Dad, let's go to practice." And he'd always go." A typical working class family, Vazquez's parents sacrificed to make sure he went to good schools and had what he needed to play baseball. "We had what we needed," said Vazquez, "And we didn't take it for granted. My dad kept us in line!"

Just one word comes to mind for Derek Lowe when asked what he recalls about growing up in Dearborn, Michigan, with his dad, Don: Basketball.

"He put a basketball hoop up for me," recalled Lowe. "And it drove my mom crazy, because my dad never let me win at anything. It didn't matter if I was 2 years old, 5, 10. I hated it at the time, but it was great because you never forgot the time you actually beat him. He would block my shots, everything. It made me very, very competitive. It was never okay to let the kid win."

Lowe credits his dad not only with fueling his own competitive fire, but also for showing him how to teach his own children, daughter, Taylor (9), and son, Tanner (5), how to compete.

"Now I find myself doing the same things my dad did with me with my own kids," said Lowe. "We play a lot of board games and card games. I'm not blocking their shots in basketball, but I don't let them win. They have to win on their own."

Lest it sound as if Don Lowe only dished out tough love, Derek quickly pointed out that his dad was almost always willing to help him work on his shots.

"He'd hold a broom up because he wanted (my sister, Deanna, and me) to have a high arcing shot," said Lowe. "He'd hold that broom for an hour so we could practice shooting."

It was the investment of time that made an impression on Lowe.

"Our parents sacrificed their weekends like a lot of parents do, in order for us to play our games," he said. "You don't think of it at the time when you're saying to your parent, 'C'mon, the game is only an hour and a half away,' but when you look back, you see the sacrifice. That's why now it's such a pleasure to see him retired and traveling whenever he wants. He'll stay with us for a month at a time. It's good to be able to do that with him."

To that point, Lowe remembered a conversation with his dad in 2004 after the Boston Red Sox won the World Series.

"The city of Boston was crazy, and we couldn't leave the house or you'd get mobbed," said Lowe. "We were sitting around the house, just reflecting on everything. My dad kicked in, 'I remember taking you to the park...' and he asked me, 'Can you believe this? Can you believe you're doing this?' I find it kind of funny, because I've been doing this for a long time. The neat thing is that he still pinches himself that I'm playing major league ball and that we travel from city to city and have these amazing experiences. That was a great moment."

Mike Gonzalez is generally regarded as the team's snappiest dresser. Whether he's in blue jeans and a designer t-shirt or duded up in a suit and tie for a travel day, Gonzalez is always impeccably dressed. It's a trait he shares with his father, Pastor Mike Gonzalez.

"My dad always looks sharp," said Gonzalez. "He wears the three-piece suits and tie on Sundays, but even in his jeans, he makes sure he looks good."

His father's influence goes deeper than outward appearances. Gonzalez is known for his intensity on the mound. It's the same focus he saw demonstrated by his dad as he pursued first a music ministry, then a preaching ministry, while Mike was growing up in Texas.

"My dad wasn't really a big baseball guy. He was always more into music," said Gonzalez. "When I started playing baseball,

he was in a band, a traveling Christian band, and they were gone a lot performing."

Though it fell to his mom, Norma, to take him to practices and games, Gonzalez said, "(My dad) was very supportive of what I wanted to do. He always backed me up."

Building the House of Refuge church in Deer Park, Texas, right outside Houston (Nov. '08 CT), was a family affair and remains one to this day.

"My pops is the man," said Gonzalez. "I've always said that if I could be half of what he is now, I'll be fine. He's a great father to me and my sisters, the way he is as a husband to my mom, the way he treats her like a queen. That's the perfect male example to me."

Most appreciated by Gonzalez is the close friendship he has with his dad.

"Even though he'll always be the father figure, he's always got that respect, now we're best friends," he said. "Before he had to be the authority and be strict and like, 'Watch your mouth.' Now we talk like men. He's who I go to for conversation or advice, and vice versa. It's great to be able to have those types of conversations with him. He tells me what's going on in his life and his profession, and I can understand it. My love and respect for him is off the charts."

Jair Jurrjens says his dad, Carl, is one of the biggest reasons he's playing professional baseball.

"I never felt like he was pushing me," said Jurrjens. "He never obligated me to do something. He'd say, 'If you don't feel like it, don't do it. It's up to you. I'm not going to make you do something just because I played that sport.'"

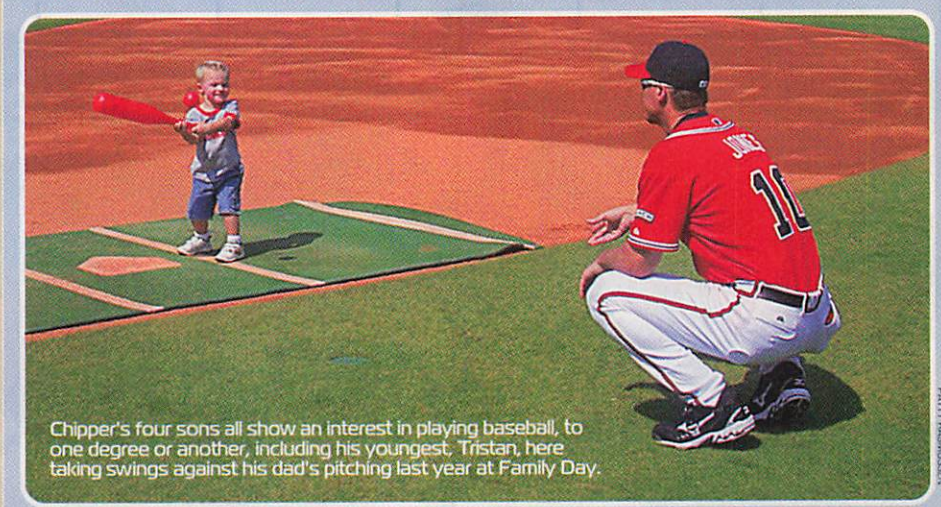
Carl Jurrjens was known as a pretty good infielder in his day. Unfortunately for him, Curacao wasn't on the baseball scouting radar at the time, and he didn't get a shot at playing professional baseball. He continued to play recreational baseball and softball, though, even after he had children.

"I think he cut his career a little short because one time he went to play ball in Aruba, and my older brother was playing Little League at the time," said Jurrjens. "It was the end of the season and my brother was so excited because he got a medal and he wanted to show it to my dad. He fell asleep wearing the medal."

When Carl Jurrjens returned home, he saw his young son sleeping with his medal and said he wouldn't play ball anymore.

"He was going to watch my brother, then I came along and he watched me," said Jurrjens. "Every day he was there for us. That's my dad."

CHIPS OFF THE OL' BLOCK



Chipper's four sons all show an interest in playing baseball, to one degree or another, including his youngest, Tristan, here taking swings against his dad's pitching last year at Family Day.

PATTY RASMUSSEN

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

LIKE HIS OWN PARENTS, Larry and Lynne Jones, were with him when he was young, Chipper Jones had no intention of pressing his sons, Matthew (11), Trey (9), Shea (4), and Tristan (3), to play baseball. But he didn't have to. The three oldest are already playing, and the fourth is chomping at the bit to begin. Here's Chipper's scouting report on each of them:

"Matthew is very advanced," he said. "He's a really good player, has had good eye-hand coordination ever since he picked up a bat. He's absolutely in love with the game. He knows all the stats, the players, who's hot, who's cold."

"I think Trey plays sports because his friends do. He's more my computer guy, smart guy, which is great. He's a sensitive kid who is making a lot of positive strides athletically. He's getting to swing the bat pretty good and turns nine in June."

"Shea is me made over. He's serious about the game. He wants to hurt someone! He's four, but he's playing with 5- and 6-year olds on a coach-pitch team. He still has a way to go with fielding and catching, but he's been hitting a pitched ball since he was almost three. He's really advanced and probably the most serious about the game of all of them. He falls asleep every night watching the Braves game."

At 3 years old, Tristan isn't playing organized ball, but between his three brothers and his dad, he can always find someone to have a catch.

The fundamentals of baseball are important, but Chipper believes the best thing he can teach his sons is discipline that will carry over into every area of their lives.

"That's the most important thing," he said. "Developing discipline and taking that into their schoolwork. In our house, it's: Obey elders, do schoolwork well, then you get to play. Playing sports is a privilege, and if you don't earn the privilege, you're not going to do it."

And Chipper is navigating the fine line between encouragement and expectation. He knows there will be an extra burden on his sons if they decide to follow in his footsteps.

"I don't want them to think that just because they're my sons that things will be given to them," said Jones. "They're going to have to earn it. It's going to be hard work, if it's what they choose to do. But they also know that Daddy isn't going to love them any less if they choose to be a school teacher or a contractor or whatever."

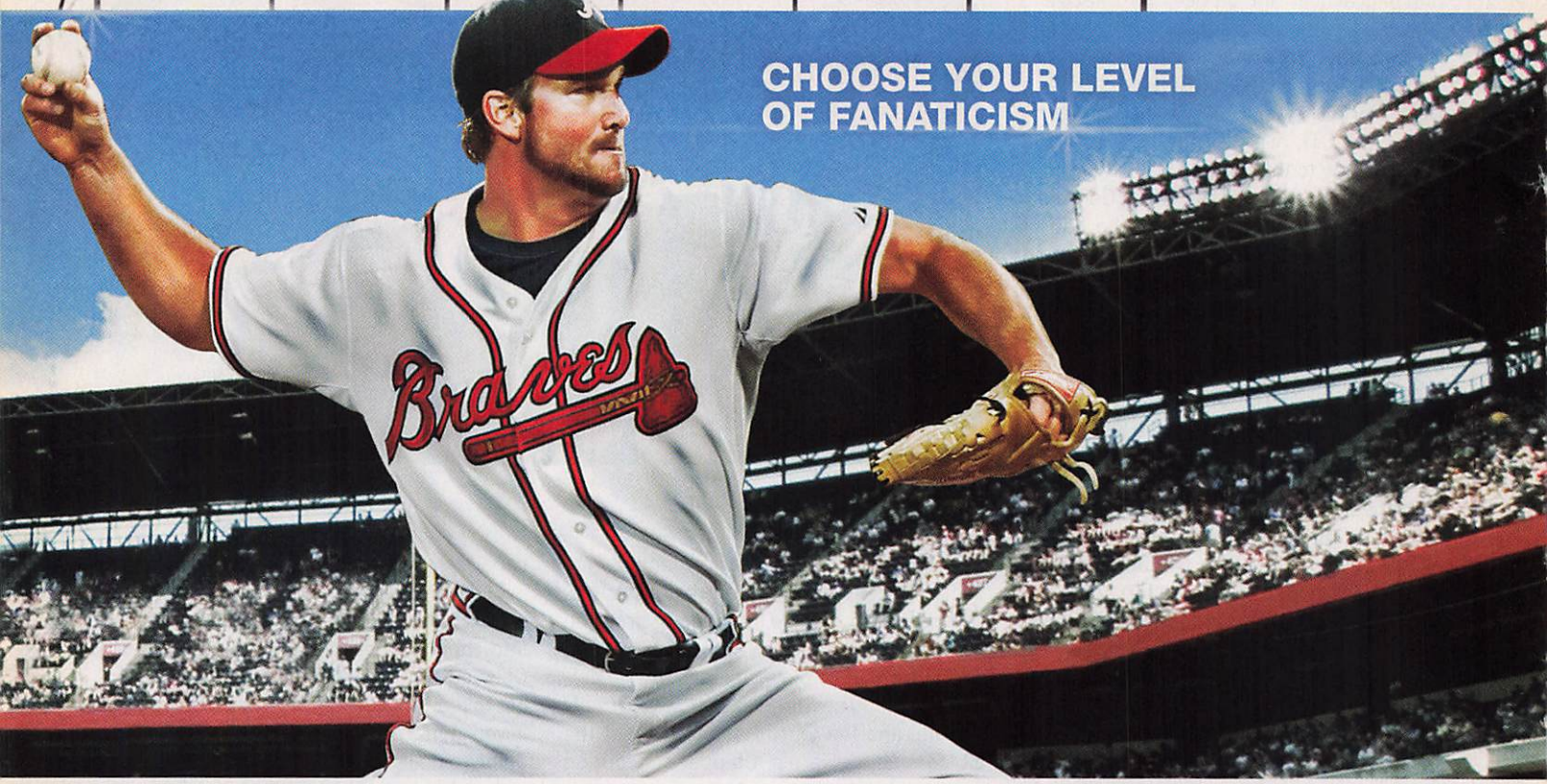
Chipper said his sons are just beginning to understand that, 'Dad might be pretty good at this baseball thing.'

"I think they'll begin to understand it at school when their classmates say stuff about me," he said. "They see me as plain old Dad."

And that's fine with Chipper. In fact, he's quick to correct his sons if they call him "Chipper Jones."

"That's the worst," he said. "I don't want them to think of me like 'Chipper Jones'. I want them to say, 'That's not Chipper Jones, that's my dad. We wrestle and we play ball, go swimming and hunting. He's not that guy on TV. He's one of my best friends.'"

THE THRILL OF TURNER FIELD



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Sun	6/28	vs Red Sox	1:30
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Thur	8/27	vs Padres	7:00
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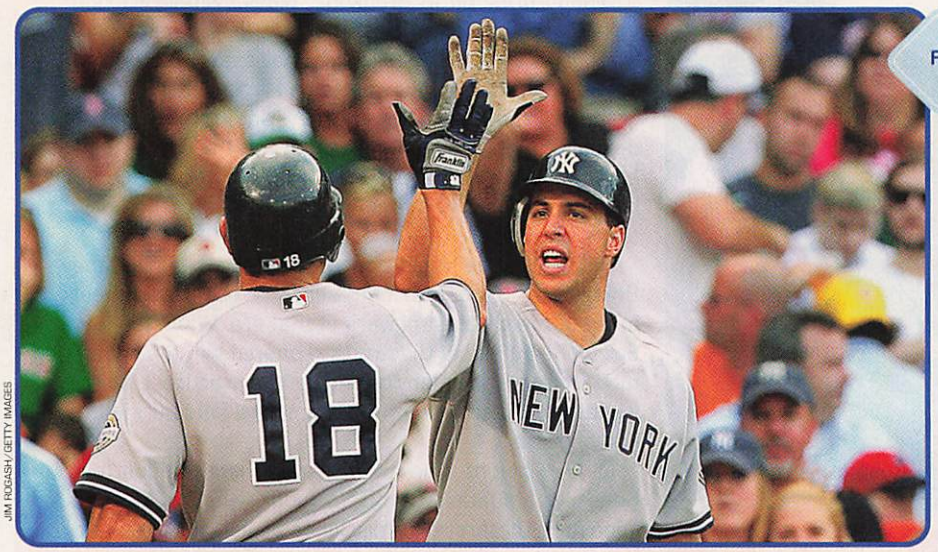
Braves

PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE

COMING ATTRACTIONS: 6 DAYS IN JUNE



JIM ROGASH/GETTY IMAGES

Think how much a hot dog would cost at Turner Field if the Braves ponied up the $180 million it took the Yankees to sign former Brave Mark Teixeira.

IN THE SPACE OF SIX DAYS in June, the Braves will play host to baseball's two marquee teams. Like it or not, these days it's the Yankees' and the Red Sox' world, and the other 28 teams are just playing in it.

Thing is, when you've got baseball's biggest draws coming to town, they bring plenty of baggage along for the ride. The fortunes and stories of Atlanta, New York and Boston wrap over, around and through each other, from the historical to the silly. So, let's take a look at some of the top storylines surrounding this year's Braves-Red Sox-Yankees double bill June 23-28:

Mark Teixeira: Tex wasn't around long enough - not even a full season, matter of fact - to really carve his name deeply into Braves history, but he represented the Braves' last, best shot at a playoff berth. Look on the bright side, though – just imagine how much a hot dog would cost if Atlanta ponied up his asking price to keep him. The Yankees gave him a reported $180 million for eight years, and as this was written, he was hitting .198.

Notable Red Sox with Braves ties include J.D. Drew, who had one eventful season here before bolting, and Tim Wakefield, whose knuckleball so baffled Atlanta in the 1992 NLCS that he would've led Pittsburgh to the World Series had it not been for Francisco Cabrera.

A-Rod versus Frenchy: Back in 2006, Alex Rodriguez was baseball's apparently untainted darling, the anti-Barry Bonds. But at the World Baseball Classic that year, A-Rod supposedly berated a clubhouse attendant. The only guy to stand up to Rodriguez was Jeff Francoeur, with exactly half a season of major league experience. Maybe you'll hear this story, maybe not. Either way, it's better than another A-Rod steroid tale, right?

The 1999 World Series: Man, this makes me feel old: Atlanta is now 10 seasons removed from its last World Series appearance, in 1999 against the Yankees. Of the Braves' five Fall Classic outings in the '90s, the 1999 one is the least memorable, mainly because Atlanta got swept as the Yankee juggernaut hit full speed.

Only five active players remain from the two teams, and you know all of them well: Chipper Jones and Tom Glavine and New York's Derek Jeter, Jorge Posada and Mariano Rivera. Backup catchers Joe Girardi and Eddie Perez are now in staff positions, Girardi as New York's manager, Perez as Atlanta's bullpen coach. It's a bittersweet anniversary, but take heart - the Yankees have only won one more World Series since then.

Derek Lowe: He's Atlanta's ace now, but it'll be tough for him to match the feats he pulled off in a Red Sox uniform. During his five years with the Red Sox, he worked in both the bullpen and the starting rotation, finding success in each. In 2004 the Red Sox finally won the World Series for the first time in generations. All Lowe did was record the win in each of the three playoffs-deciding games – Division Series, Championship Series, World Series – the only time in baseball history a pitcher has pulled off such a feat. Even though he signed with the Dodgers after the 2004 season, he wore his Red Sox uniform to Boston's ring ceremony in 2005.

Carpetbaggers and bandwagoners: If there's anything more disconcerting than empty seats at the ballpark for big games, it's seats filled by the opposing team's fans, especially if those fans are frontrunners who've recently latched onto the Yankees or Red Sox. There are plenty of things you could do to such folks, but the safest is this – out-cheer 'em. And if one of them happens to be a friend or family member, hide their keys.

Kawakami vs. Dice-K: The Red Sox series could see a matchup of two former Japanese rookies of the year in Kenshin Kawakami and Daisuke Matsuzaka. The two have faced each other before, most notably in the 2004 Japan Series. In Japan's equivalent of the World Series, Dice-K's Seibu Lions knocked off Kawakami's Chunichi Dragons in seven games.

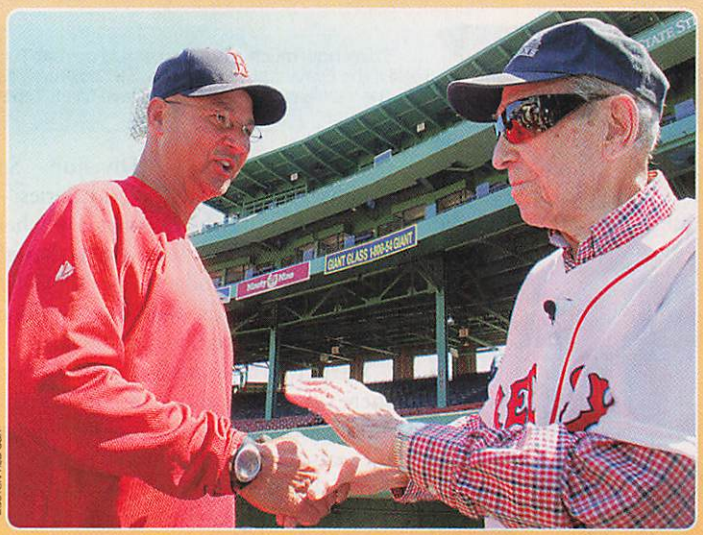
If the rotation pits them against one another, as it did in the spring, expect the Japanese press, and plenty of bad headline puns, to flood Atlanta.

So, there you have it. Two series, many stories. And it'll be one of the more enjoyable June weeks in...

...Oh, wait... that's right. We're forgetting someone:

John Smoltz. There's no telling at this point whether Smoltz will be ready to pitch for Boston when the Braves series rolls around. But he'll almost certainly be present and in uniform on the Boston bench. And if his arm isn't literally in flames, he'll almost certainly do everything he can to pitch against Atlanta. While he doesn't appear to have the bitterness many other players hold against their former employers, Smoltz has a competitive drive that's unmatched, and he'd like nothing more than to notch one more win at Turner Field.

It should be quite a six days!



BOSTON RED SOX

BOSTON LEGAL

THE EARLY BIRD doesn't always get the worm. Sometimes he gets to be a Braves batboy. That's what happened to Arthur Giddon (above with Red Sox manager Terry Francona) 87 years ago, which is why he found himself serving as a Boston Red Sox batboy May 2 at Fenway Park - the day before his 100th birthday!

Giddon grew up in Brookline, Mass., within walking distance of old Braves Field that was the Braves' home from 1915 through 1952, their final season in Boston before relocating to Milwaukee. A Harvard Law School graduate and a retired attorney and former public defender in Hartford, Conn., Giddon was the Braves' batboy in 1922 and '23, a job he said he got at age 13 because he went to the ballpark early and got to know some employees.

He didn't see much good baseball, because the Braves lost 100 games both seasons, but he did meet many of the greatest players of that era. When the Red Sox found out about Giddon, they offered him the opportunity to serve as batboy during batting practice. Liability issues prevented him from being on the field during the actual game.

In 1922 before a game at Braves Field, Giddon met Kenesaw Mountain Landis, a judge who'd just been appointed the first commissioner of baseball. He said Landis asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up, and when Giddon said he didn't know, Landis suggested he become a lawyer.

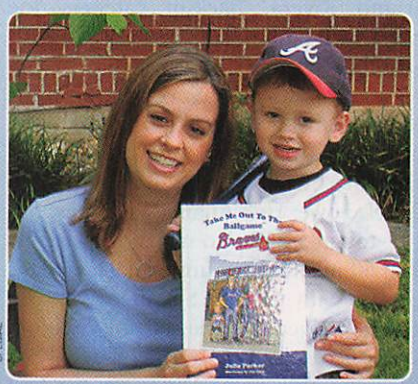
Giddon said the only payment he received for his duties with the Braves were free baseballs, but he said he didn't collect autographs and has no baseball memorabilia. His vision impaired by macular degeneration, Giddon wore a Red Sox jersey with the number 100 on it that his daughter made for him.

BY THE BOOK

JULIE PARKER (below with her son, Wiley) figured her family's life was so entwined with the Braves and Turner Field that she'd write a book about it. "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" is a children's book that takes readers on an adventure to Turner Field as seen through kids' eyes.

"My husband is from Atlanta and is a big Braves fan," said Parker, 32, who holds a master's degree from Georgia State University in early childhood education and is a former kindergarten teacher in Gwinnett County. "He's a season ticket holder, and our 3-year-old son, Wiley, is at every game possible. He absolutely loves it, and he's really the inspiration for the book.

"I wanted to write a book about one of the best days a kid can have at the ballpark - catching a home run ball in batting practice, going to Tooner Field, running the bases at Sky Field, the fireworks... Turner Field is a very friendly stadium, and a lot of parents don't realize it. There are a lot of things for kids to do."



SPECIAL

Released in early May by Mascot Books, a self-publishing company, the 24-page, hardcover book with colorful illustrations by Jon Chad is available at the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center, through the Braves Clubhouse Collection Catalog, at some Atlanta bookstores, and online at mascotbooks.com for $14.95.

Parker is currently developing educational activities for parents and preschoolers that can be seen at her website, tottivities.com.

GETTING TO KNOW

KENSHIN KAWAKAMI

FAVORITE MOVIE:
Saving Private Ryan
MUSIC GENRE:
Pop
PANCAKES OR WAFFLES:
Neither! Toast!
HOLIDAY:
Oshogatsu (Japanese New Year)
PET:
Toy Poodle, Lulu
PIZZA TOPPING:
BBQ Chicken With Red Onions
DESSERT:
Soft Serve Ice Cream
DREAM VACATION:
Arizona In Winter
FAVORITE PLAYER:
Randy Johnson
FAVORITE TEAM:
Atlanta Braves
SUPERMAN, BATMAN OR SPIDERMAN:
Spiderman
MOST ADMIRED SPORTS FIGURE:
Tiger Woods
FAVORITE JAPANESE FOOD:
Japanese Noodles

MATT DIAZ

FAVORITE MUSIC ARTIST:
Billy Joel
HOLIDAY:
Christmas
LEAST FAVORITE EXERCISE:
Cardio
PIZZA TOPPING:
Ham And Green Peppers
DESSERT:
Cheesecake
TV SHOW:
Lost
DREAM VACATION:
Italy
FAVORITE SPORT TO WATCH:
Baseball
FAVORITE BOARD/CARD GAME:
Nerts (Cards)
TOUGHEST PITCHER TO FACE:
Brandon Webb
FURTHEST YOU'VE BEEN FROM HOME:
Turkey
PERSONAL HERO:
Zach, Older Brother
SUPERMAN, BATMAN OR SPIDERMAN:
Batman (Played by Christian Bale)
MOST ADMIRED SPORTS FIGURE:
Ted Williams

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

PUT THE "SINK" IN THE SINKER

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

DEREK LOWE (above) throws perhaps the game's most devastating sinker. The physics behind the pitch make it all the more incredible.

"It's not so much something he's doing, as it is something he's not doing. He's not putting the backspin on the ball," said Dr. Alan Nathan, a professor of physics at the University of Illinois.

Most pitchers put backspin on the ball when they throw a normal four-seam fastball, a pitch that basically goes straight. The backspin would cause the ball to break upward, except that a pitched baseball cannot rise due to the force of gravity pulling it downward. So the rising action gets more than offset by gravity, causing this pitch to drop only a few inches.

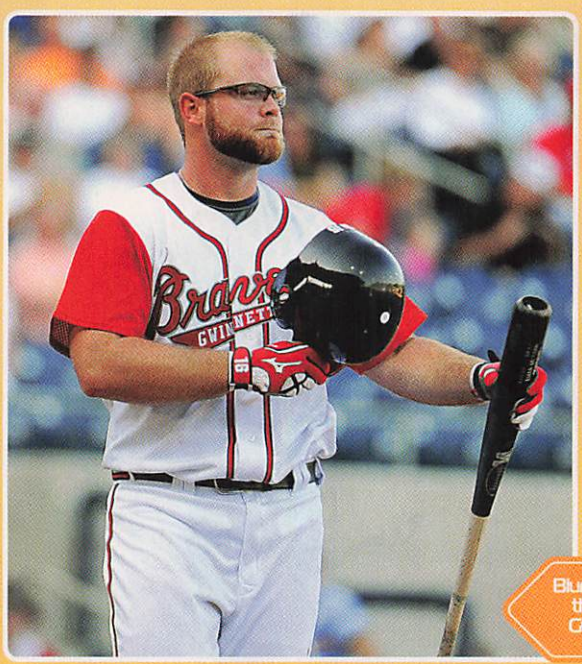
Lowe's sinker, which he grips across two seams, lacks rising action because it has little or no backspin. So with gravity acting on it, Lowe's sinker drops about eight inches more than a typical four-seam fastball. This pitch behaves almost as if it is only under the influence of gravity.

"That is the key to the sinker - throwing it with a reduced amount of backspin," said Nathan, who has presented at Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) Conventions on the aerodynamics of baseball.

As if hitting Lowe's sinker isn't hard enough, he also can make the pitch break horizontally in either direction. This happens due to the sidespin he applies to the pitch, and makes him equally effective against right-handed hitters and lefties.

Nathan added that a baseball's stitches don't play an important role in how pitches travel through the air. However, they make it far easier for the pitcher to grip the ball and apply spin.

– STEVE FALL



MELINDA PEASE

Blurry vision caused Brian McCann to get off to a slow start and eventually go on the disabled list, but after he started wearing glasses in a rehab appearance with Gwinnett, he seemed on his way to returning to All-Star and Silver Slugger form.

MAC'S ATTACK

BRIAN McCANN finally resorted to wearing glasses, at least to hit, in order to correct blurry vision in his left eye. Though he told ChopTalk (pages 18-19) he also would wear the glasses when catching, he appeared to still be experimenting with that, since he did not have the glasses on at times behind the plate.

The blurry vision is due to the Lasik surgery he had in 2007 that he said enabled him to see better than ever during 2008. But he began having trouble on Opening Night. He tried eye drops and ointment, as well as a contact lens, then eventually went on the disabled list April 25 in an attempt to resolve the problem. After trying the glasses in a rehab appearance at Gwinnett May 7, he was activated the next day.

McCann said he will wear the glasses for the rest of the season and decide afterwards whether or not to have another Lasik procedure or continue with the glasses.

GLAVINE REPORT

At press time, **Tom Glavine** was continuing his attempt to fight back from elbow and shoulder surgery last August to try to re-join the Atlanta rotation and add to his career victory total of 305. He had yet to be on the active roster this season, and at one point, hinted he might have to consider retiring due to what proved to be a relatively minor setback in his rehabilitation April 12.

However, Glavine began to make steady progress and appeared to be nearing a point where he would go on a minor league rehab assignment in mid- to late-May. The 43-year-old lefty was particularly encouraged by a pain-free bullpen session May 4 at Turner Field.

AN ALL-B TRADE

The Braves traded **Blaine Boyer** to the St. Louis Cardinals April 20, in exchange for outfielder **Brian Barton**, who was assigned to Triple-A Gwinnett.

Barton, 27, is in his fifth professional season. The 6-foot-3, 190-pounder made his major league debut last year after he was selected by the Cardinals in the Rule 5 Draft in December 2007. He played 82 games for the Cardinals and batted .268 (41-for-153), with 13 extra-base hits, including two home runs. He hit .289 (11-for-38) with one home run as a pinch-hitter. The Cardinals were 17-13 when he was in the starting lineup.

Originally signed by the Cleveland Indians as a non-drafted free agent in 2004, Barton attended the University of Miami, where he tied for the team lead in batting average and was named to the College World Series All-Tournament Team as a junior. He needs one more semester to complete his degree in aerospace engineering and has completed internships with Boeing and NASA.

Boyer, 27, appeared in three games for the Braves this season and allowed six runs on three hits and three walks. He was designated for assignment on April 18. Boyer owns a career record of 6-9 with a 5.46 ERA in 129 games (117 innings).

MORE MOVES

Jorge Campillo, who won eight games for the Braves last year as one of the biggest surprises of the season, was placed on the disabled list April 17 with tendinitis in his shoulder. **James Parr** was recalled from Gwinnett to take his place in the bullpen.

When **Blaine Boyer** was designated for assignment April 18, the Braves promoted **Jo-Jo Reyes** to start that night's game and assume the fifth slot in the rotation while **Tom Glavine** continued to rehab his shoulder and elbow.

Garret Anderson, who started the season on the disabled list with a strained calf, had to return to the DL April 24 due to a strained left quad. **Brandon Jones** was recalled from Gwinnett to replace him on the roster.

Due to blurry vision in his left eye, **Brian McCann** finally had to go on the DL April 25 (retroactive to April 23), and **Clint Sammons** was recalled from Gwinnett to replace him.

Anderson was activated May 5, and Jones was optioned to Gwinnett.

McCann, who had rehab stints at Myrtle Beach and Gwinnett, was activated May 8, and Sammons was optioned to Gwinnett.

SHORT HOPS

- The Braves signed righthander **Tony Armas Jr.** on May 11 to a minor league contract and assigned him to Double-A Mississippi. Armas, 31, has 10 years of major league experience (53-65, 4.65) with Montreal, Washington, Pittsburgh

and the Mets and was released by the Mets in spring training.

- The annual draft of high school and college players begins June 9. The Braves pick seventh overall in the first round and then don't pick again until 87th (third round) because they lost their second round pick to the Dodgers for signing **Derek Lowe**.

- **Yunel Escobar** strained an abdominal muscle April 16 when he did his customary jump in the on-deck circle. He had to leave the game and missed the three-game series in Pittsburgh.

- **Chipper Jones** missed four games April 15-18 due to a bruised left thumb. He also suffered a hyperextended right elbow, which already was sore from tendinitis, May 10 at Philadelphia. He had to leave the game in the seventh inning and missed the opener of the Mets series May 11. Due to going hitless in the three at-bats he had May 10 against the Phillies, he failed to become the sixth player since 1954 to have a 30-game hitting streak against one team. His streak ended at 29 (38-for-100, .380), the longest streak for a Brave against any team.

THE ROSTER

AS OF MAY 13

PITCHERS | 12

JEFF BENNETT
BUDDY CARLYLE
MIKE GONZALEZ
JAIR JURRJENS
KENSHIN KAWAKAMI
DEREK LOWE
PETER MOYLAN
ERIC O'FLAHERTY
JAMES PARR
JO-JO REYES
RAFAEL SORIANO
JAVIER VAZQUEZ

CATCHERS | 2

BRIAN MCCANN
DAVID ROSS

INFIELDERS | 6

YUNEL ESCOBAR
OMAR INFANTE
KELLY JOHNSON
CHIPPER JONES
CASEY KOTCHMAN
MARTIN PRADO

OUTFIELDERS | 5

GARRET ANDERSON
MATT DIAZ
JEFF FRANCOEUR
GREG NORTON
JORDAN SCHAFER

FRANK WREN
GENERAL MANAGER

WE ARE VERY RELIEVED MCCANN'S VISION IS OKAY

WE'VE BEEN GETTING some big hits lately, and we've had more depth in the lineup. It helped a lot to get back Brian McCann and Garret Anderson. They're two keys to our success. Outside of Chipper, they're two of the most professional hitters we have.

When you have three professional hitters like that in a row in the lineup, no matter what order they're in, it makes it much more difficult for opposing teams to get through your lineup. And when that happens, it gives the other hitters - before and after - better pitches to hit. It also makes the other team's pitchers work harder, causes them to use more pitchers, and allows us to get into their bullpens earlier. There are a lot of ripple effects from having depth in the lineup.

We talked about it more than once that our lineup isn't the most powerful, but the depth up and down the order allows us to have an offense that will score runs. It's just different than the others that have a big power hitter.

We were all concerned about the trouble McCann was having with his vision. The eyes are probably the least appreciated, yet most important, aspect of a player's skills. The assumption is that you can see. But when you start to have trouble with your vision, you realize how important it is to the overall game. Doctors can fix a lot of things, but that's one that they can make better, but not necessarily fix it if it's serious enough.

Now we think he'll be able to do very well in glasses. He's still experimenting a little with when to wear them while he's catching, but we think he'll be able to do very well with glasses for the rest of the season. Then we'll re-evaluate what the next step is after the season. We're hopeful he's on the right track now, because he's a key part of the club.

> "THE EYES ARE PROBABLY THE LEAST APPRECIATED, YET MOST IMPORTANT, ASPECT OF A PLAYER'S SKILLS."

Garret Anderson is 100 percent now, and he's made an impact. He had some big hits and helped us sweep Florida and win two of three in Philadelphia and in New York. Having him back in there took some pressure off some of the younger guys.

Casey Kotchman has been on fire. He's been playing well and getting some big hits. I think he'll continue to get more comfortable as time goes on, and I think getting back Mac and Garret allowed him to relax a little, too.

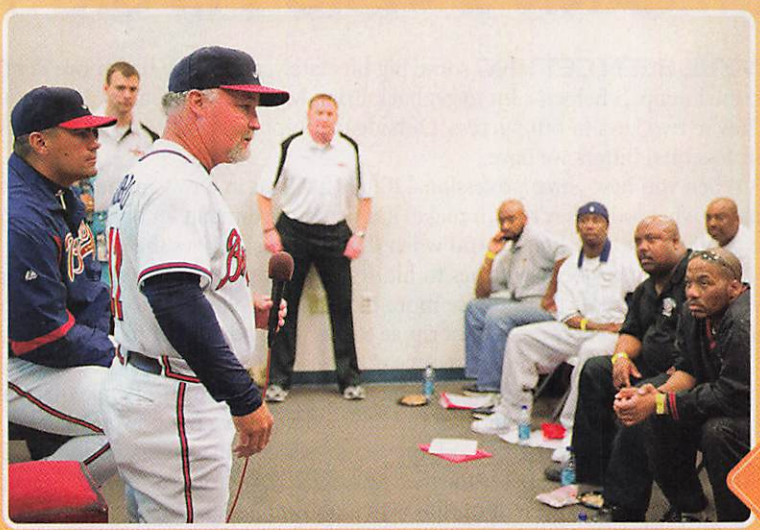
Kelly Johnson is looking more like his old self. Streaks and slumps are difficult to assess, but it looks like he's coming out of it.

Omar Infante continues to show he's a good player. And Martin Prado filled in at third for Chipper and did a heckuva job. Matt Diaz plays left field against a tough lefty (Johan Santana) and gets three big hits. David Ross filled in very well for McCann, and Greg Norton has been getting big hits the last couple of weeks. The bench has really given us a lift. It makes us a more rounded team.

The bullpen is lining up, too. The three big guys (Peter Moylan, Rafael Soriano and Mike Gonzalez) are doing the job, and Eric O'Flaherty is looking good, too. That's what we need in tight games. The starters are going into the seventh or eighth, and the other guys are taking us home. Moylan isn't all the way back from surgery, but he's real close. I think he'll be more like his old self in the second half, but his stuff is plenty good enough to get hitters out now.

Jordan Schafer is still playing very well in center field, and he's making adjustments at the plate. The adjustments are coming a little slower than we'd like, but as long as we see improvements and better at-bats, we'll give him every opportunity. He's a talented kid.

HUBBY & EDDIE SHOW


ATLANTA BRAVES

Glenn Hubbard, with Eddie Perez on his left, gives tips on the finer points of instruction to 150 volunteer youth baseball coaches at the Jr. Braves Clinic at Turner Field.

GLENN HUBBARD and **Eddie Perez** greeted about 150 volunteer coaches from the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club and Atlanta Parks and Recreation and provided advice for teaching the fundamentals of baseball at the Jr. Braves Coaches Clinic April 11 at Turner Field. The clinic was held in partnership with the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation, and staff from that organization also participated. The volunteers took part in a question-and-answer session with Hubbard and Perez and received training on topics including techniques for teaching baseball fundamentals, running effective practices, proper nutrition, injury prevention, and the Jr. Braves Four Bases of Character: confidence, teamwork, leadership and integrity.

CHANGE FOR CHIPPER

Chipper Jones, the local honorary chair for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's CureFinders® school fundraising program, visited the top earning school on April 28, to congratulate and thank the winners. Students at Davis Elementary in the Atlanta suburb of Marietta raised $6,000 and were led by **Bryan Jones**, a physical education teacher at the school, who has a nine-month-old son with Cystic Fibrosis. Metro Atlanta area schools raised a total of more than $25,000 for the campaign.

CureFinders has over 1,000 schools nationwide participating. Students from grades K-12 collect spare change, and classes compete to raise the most money at their school. The program has raised over $2 million dollars. This is the first year of the program in Georgia.

Since his rookie season in 1993, Chipper has helped raise more than $500,000 for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation through Chipper Jones Family Foundation fundraising events and personal contributions.

HONORING PETE & SKIP

Braves Hall of Fame broadcasters **Pete Van Wieren** and the late **Skip Caray** will be inducted into the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame Saturday, June 6, at the organization's fifth annual ceremony. The event will be held at the Emory Conference Center and Hotel at 1615 Clifton Rd., beginning with a reception and silent auction at 5:30 and followed by a dinner and awards and induction ceremony at 7 p.m. Individual tickets are $100. Call (770) 394-3359. Visit atlantasportshalloffame.org for information.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

The Braves are offering all fans a birthday present - a free ticket to a game at Turner Field. Fans can go to braves.com/birthday to register for their free ticket to a game (excluding the Yankees and Red Sox games June 23-28). See the following chart for the month in which you qualify for a ticket.

BIRTH MONTH	FREE TICKET
April or October	April, May, October
May or November	May
June or December	June
July or January	July
August or February	August
September or March	September

GOLF FOR CHARITY

The fourth annual Atlanta Braves Foundation Golf Classic took place April 30, at East Lake Golf Club and raised $150,000 to support the foundation's youth outreach efforts and numerous charitable causes throughout the metro Atlanta community. Braves president John Schuerholz led celebrity participants.

Atlanta Braves Foundation grant applications are available at braves.com/grants, and the deadline for submission is July 31. Grant Guidelines: The Atlanta Braves Foundation will consider granting funds to youth-serving organizations that focus on health, education, and recreation; that have sound financial practices; and whose plans for the requested funds will have a significant impact upon the individuals served by the requesting organization. The Atlanta Braves Foundation makes grants to non-profit, tax-exempt organizations in Georgia under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Since its inception in 1992, the Atlanta Braves Foundation has contributed more than $3 million in financial assistance to the community.

BASEBALL 101

The registration deadline is June 1 for this year's Baseball 101. Women who want to learn more about America's national pastime and even sharpen their baseball skills can sign up for this popular clinic presented by Publix Super Markets. Baseball

101 will take place on Saturday, June 6, at Turner Field, and ladies 18 years of age and up can register online at braves.com/baseball101 or contact the Braves Community Affairs Department at (404) 614-1435.

Baseball 101 offers women the opportunity to learn batting, fielding, and pitching skills from Braves players and coaches. In addition to the on-field clinic, a variety of Braves "guest professors" will host a panel discussion on topics such as scouting, player development, the nuances of baseball, nutrition and fitness. The clinic will end with an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of Turner Field.

Registration, which includes two tickets to that night's 7 p.m. game against the Milwaukee Brewers, is $80 for the Upper Box Package and $110 for the Outfield Package, with proceeds benefiting the Atlanta Braves Foundation and the **Doris Shaheen** Breast Health Center at Piedmont Hospital.

In addition to the on-field clinic with Braves players and coaches and two tickets to that night's game, the registration fee includes lunch, a Baseball 101 t-shirt, and a Braves gift bag with an autographed item.

BALLS & STRIKES

- Fans can vote for the starting lineups for this year's All-Star Game, scheduled July 14 in St. Louis, by picking up ballots at Turner Field or by casting ballots online at braves.com. The deadline for submitting ballots is July 2. Braves on the ballot are **Brian McCann**, **Casey Kotchman**, **Kelly Johnson**, **Yunel Escobar**, **Chipper Jones**, **Garret Anderson**, **Jordan Schafer** and **Jeff Francoeur**.

- The Braves held the first of two Bark in the Park dates May 3. Fans who pre-registered were able to bring their dogs to Turner Field for the game and sit in a special section. The second Bark in the Park is scheduled Sept. 6.

- **Chip Moore**, who has spent the last 17 seasons at various levels of controller for the Atlanta Braves, was promoted to chief financial officer.

- All Braves players and coaches, as well as all uniformed personnel throughout Major League Baseball, wore No. 42 on April 15, the 62nd anniversary of **Jackie Robinson** integrating the majors on that date in 1947.

BOBBY COX

MANAGER

OUR BENCH IS EXCELLENT AND A KEY TO OUR TEAM

I HAD HIGH HOPES and expectations for our pitching staff before the season started, and I think we've seen those guys live up to the expectations. There have been strong performances from all our starters. For the most part, they've stayed in the games, pitched strong, and given us a chance to win.

I believe Kenshin Kawakami has pitched better than his line indicates. He's got really good, major league stuff and is a tough competitor. He has good pitches, good location, and understands that he has to execute the game plan that Roger McDowell gives him. Kenshin's a good athlete. He fields his position well and has gotten a few hits. He's a good teammate and a lot of fun to be around.

The first couple months were up and down, as they often are. We've had some injuries, but we have great bench guys who don't just fill in, but really help the team, as well. Once we got the whole team healthy and on the field, I think we've seen some excellent baseball.

Consistency is the most important thing, and that comes from having a well-balanced team. I think our team is very well-balanced - it's one of our strengths. We have good starting pitching, a good defensive team, a team capable of providing good offense, and a bullpen that's shaping up to be excellent.

Good pitching can always shut down offense, and we've seen that happen to our team. But it goes both ways. Over the long haul, all things being equal and people staying healthy, the Braves are a good, well-balanced ballclub.

> "OVER THE LONG HAUL... PEOPLE STAYING HEALTHY, THE BRAVES ARE A GOOD, WELL-BALANCED BALLCLUB."

Another key to success is playing loose. You have to have fun when you're playing. It's easier to catch a ball when you're not playing tight. It's certainly easier to hit when you're not all wound up. It's important for our guys to have that attitude, to play loose, have fun, and play their game. They can't let the other guys dictate how they're going to approach the game, a particular hitter or an at-bat.

Having good outings from pitchers, seeing good at-bats from hitters, executing a good defensive play all contribute to a team knowing that they are capable of winning. All that builds confidence, and that breeds the attitude you have to have to win ballgames. A lot of it has to do with staying healthy and knowing that the guys playing around you aren't hurting.

A good bench helps everyone. When Mac (Brian McCann) went down, David Ross was right in back of him. He didn't just keep the bench warm, he went out and contributed hits, home runs. He's an example of the kind of guys we always want to have. It contributes to a team's confidence to have a strong bench.

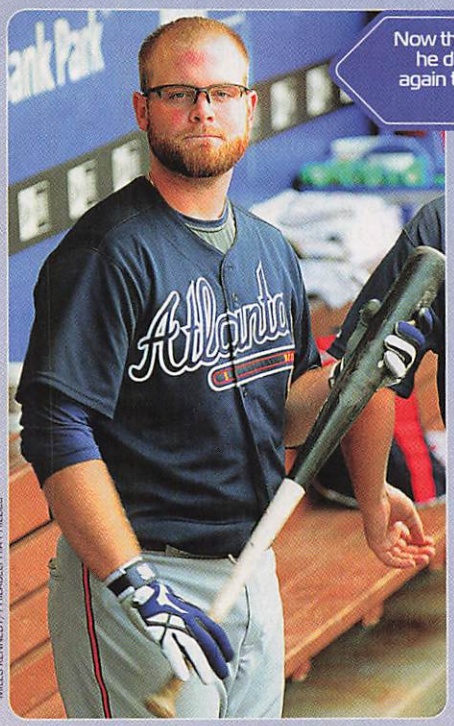
I enjoyed getting to see the Mets' new ballpark, Citi Field. If ever there was a city that deserved a new ballpark, it's Queens. Shea Stadium was run down, but the new place is beautiful. It's also a true baseball park. It's big, with lots of foul territory. There are no cheap home runs. It's a true pitcher's park. I think we'll see plenty of low scoring, close games there.

I'm looking forward to inter-league play this year. First up were the Toronto Blue Jays (May 22-24), one of my old teams, who had a good bit of success in the early part of the season. (Manager) Cito Gaston, who was a former player and a former coach for me, has done a great job with his players.

Of course, a couple of the biggest series of the season at Turner Field happen in June when the Yankees and Red Sox come to town. It's going to be a playoff atmosphere with those two teams, and their fans, in town.

PLAYING PEPPER

BRIAN McCANN



MILES KENNEDY/PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

Now that McCann's blurry vision is corrected with glasses, he doesn't believe he'll have a problem with his eyesight again this year, though he's undecided about whether he'll have another Lasik procedure in the off-season.

INTERVIEW BY
PATTY RASMUSSEN

CHOPTALK: When did you first experience a problem with your left eye?

BRIAN McCANN: It was Opening Night in Philadelphia. It was weird, because it just happened as the lights went on. I knew something wasn't right, but I thought, "It's the excitement, it's Opening Night, I'm imagining it." But it didn't go away. I told (trainer) Jeff Porter, "Hey my left eye is kind of blurry," so we put some drops in it, and I figured it would go away. It didn't really. That night I went to bed thinking I'd get up the next day and it would be all right. But it wasn't. The day games didn't bother me as much as the night games. We got back to Atlanta for our home opener, and when I woke up that morning, I knew I had a problem that wasn't going away.

CT: At that point, did you think it was something serious, or were you thinking it was an infection that would clear up in a few days with medicine?

McCANN: I didn't think it was a major thing, or I probably didn't want to think it was a major thing. But my gut feeling was that my eyesight had changed a little bit, and I was going to have problems until it was solved. I saw a doctor and told him that my eyes were really dry. One of the things we did when I got home from Philly was get my eyes examined to see if they had actually changed or whether I just had a "dry spot" over the part of the eye that causes you to actually see. We didn't get a definite answer. So, we tried a contact lens in just the left eye, which is my dominant eye, and different types of solutions.

CT: How would you describe how you were seeing? Did you actually play with it? That must have been scary, facing major league pitching without your best eyesight?

McCANN: The way I'd describe my vision is like this: When I was standing at home plate looking straight out at the scoreboard, the numbers looked blurry. If I covered my right eye, I couldn't see the numbers at all. If I covered my left eye, I could see the numbers fine. What was happening was that the left eye was dragging down the good right eye. I also couldn't pick up movement off to the side with my left eye. I tried to play with it that way, but it was taking over my game. I wouldn't describe it as scary, but it was taking my focus away from the game. When I was catching, I was so intent on the pitcher and picking up the ball as he threw it that I wasn't as aware of the rest of the game. Catching a pitch is normally second nature. I don't even think about it. But with my eyesight distracting me, I wasn't focusing on the other parts of the game, calling the game, setting up a hitter. I was just trying to catch the ball! As far as hitting, that's when I knew I needed to get this figured out. In Pittsburgh, Paul Maholm threw a pitch up and in on me, and I didn't even see it. I was hit twice in that game (April 17).

> "IN PITTSBURGH, PAUL MAHOLM THREW A PITCH UP AND IN ON ME, AND I DIDN'T EVEN SEE IT. I WAS HIT TWICE IN THAT GAME."

CT: The reason for the blurry vision has been described several ways. Is it a result of the Lasik surgery you had?

McCANN: My eyesight has changed since I had Lasik surgery in 2007. This problem isn't a result of the surgery. I saw better last season than I had ever seen. We followed every procedure perfectly before I had Lasik. My eyes had been stable for three and a half years. The prescription hadn't changed, and it was believed they had stopped "growing." There was no reason to believe they were going to change again after remaining stable for over three years. I don't regret for a minute having Lasik. It was the best thing I have ever done. The surgery perfected my vision for one and three-quarters years.

CT: What was your frustration level like? How many different solutions did you try? Different types of drops? Contact lenses?

McCANN: I was just searching for answers. I didn't want to go on the disabled list early in the season. With the first doctor, we tried seven or eight prescriptions of soft contact lenses. The problem would come when the contact was put on my eye - 30 minutes later, it would dry up and move. I saw the doctor in Washington, D.C., but I knew it wasn't right. The same thing happened with the contact lenses there. I thought that would be my last shot before I would consider going on the DL. After D.C., we went to Cincinnati. I took batting practice, but I'd had enough. I just thought, "I can't continue to do this," and I didn't want the problem to get too far so that I was up against the All-Star break without having figured it out. It was a bad month. I just wanted to get it figured out. I talked to Bobby (Cox) after BP and decided that I should go on the DL and just get it settled.

CT: What was it like being on the DL, trying to figure this out?

McCANN: It was really tough. I hated sitting on the bench just watching the games, knowing I should be out there. But what put me more at ease was when I saw (backup catcher) David Ross play. That was an unbelievably good signing, getting him this winter. I saw him swing the bat, calling great games. It was great watching him play and seeing how solid he was. He was and is invaluable for our team.

We tried about 10 to 12 different contacts but after 30 minutes to an hour later, I'd have the same (drying) problem. I was seeing Dr. Dave Ross every single day at that point, driving to his office. He really got me through this whole thing, really held me together. He could see I was getting frustrated, and he's a really positive guy. He'd say, "We're going to get this thing figured out," and finally suggested I try the glasses. I was skeptical, but he said, "It's going to be fine." I knew it was the quickest way to be back (with the team) on May 8, so I thought I'd try it. The first night I wore the glasses (on a rehab assignment with the Gwinnett Braves), I knew I could see perfectly. It was 6 p.m. and there were shadows at the ballpark, so that made it tough. But that didn't have anything to do with the glasses. I knew I'd be all right. I'm getting used to them, just like I've gotten used to other gear.

CT: You had some problem wearing glasses with the hockey style mask. Will you stick with your original catcher's mask?

McCANN: They fogged up too much with the hockey style mask, but they're fine with my old mask. No problems at all. I tried catching in Gwinnett without the glasses at all, but after a pitch got past me, the kind of pitch I'd stopped hundreds of times before, I knew I'd need to wear the glasses.

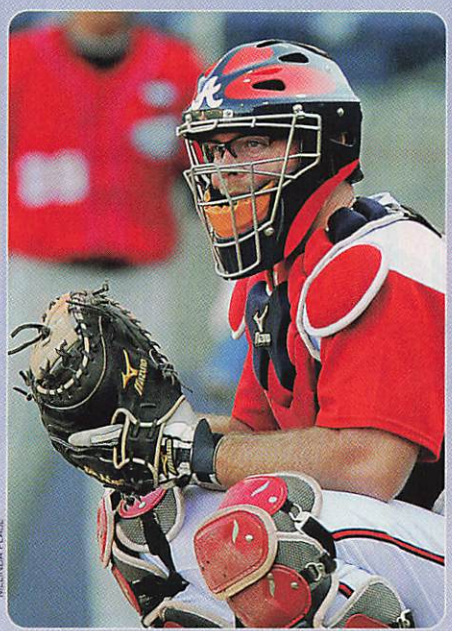
CT: Describe your glasses. They're the Oakley sports glasses, right?

McCANN: Yeah, they're made of plastic and they have lenses that you can swap out. I have prescription lenses for both my eyes. The left eye has a touch of astigmatism, and there's a slight correction in the right eye, too. I have prescription sunglass lenses that I can wear for day, or batting practice.

CT: Is there a long-term solution Do you plan to have more surgery after the season or stick with the glasses?

McCANN: At this point, I plan to re-evaluate the situation at the end of the season. I know I'll get used to the glasses in no time. That's not an issue. I might wait to have Lasik again to make sure my eyes are done "growing."

CT: Are you wearing the glasses full-time, on and off the field? Do you think the problem is resolved permanently? Could it be an issue later in the season or in future years?



MELINDA PEASE

McCann found that the hockey style mask he wore during a rehab game at Gwinnett (above) caused his glasses to fog, so he decided to go back to using a traditional mask.

McCANN: Yes, I wear them full-time. I don't see this as an issue that is going to come back to haunt me. I know that my eyesight is corrected when I'm wearing glasses. We've figured out a way for me to wear glasses and play at a high level of competition, so whether I wear glasses or not isn't really a concern.

CT: As happy as you were about getting back in the lineup, were you also nervous? Especially about hitting?

McCANN: No. When we got up to Philly (May 8) and I was wearing the glasses, I could see perfectly. It was the perfect test for me, because I was facing one of the toughest left-handed pitchers in the game (Cole Hamels), and before the glasses, it was lefties who were giving me the most trouble. I couldn't see the ball coming out of their hand, and couldn't pick up the spin or movement. But I knew I could see when I stepped in. Then when I made contact, I was almost smiling inside. After going through everything - the drops, the contact, the doctors, the DL, I knew I was going to be fine. I could just hit and not worry about anything else.

CT: What about your minor league rehab assignments?

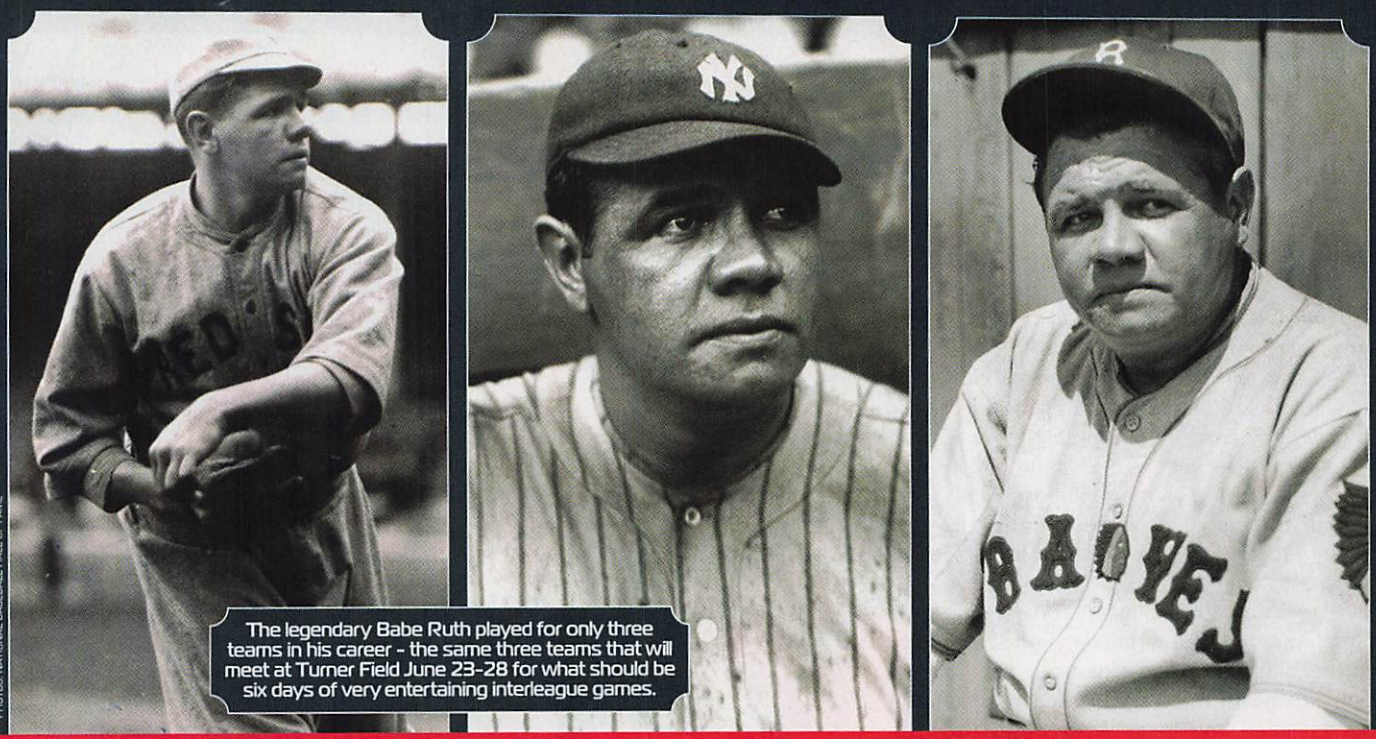
McCANN: I kind of wish I could go back to Myrtle Beach, because when I was there, I was so distracted with trying to fix my eye that I didn't really get to interact with the young guys as much as I would have liked. I was on the phone all the time talking to the doctor, trying to figure out what to do next. It was great to be back at Myrtle Beach, because my season there (2004) propelled me toward playing in the big leagues. It was a great place for me, a real stepping stone in my career. It's the place I thought, "I can really do this."

CT: What was it like to play at the Gwinnett stadium?

McCANN: It was awesome. It's less than 10 minutes from my house. The night I played there, I had my whole family and my wife's whole family there. I had friends from high school up in one of the luxury suites. It's where I grew up. There were people in the stands calling out to me, "Hey, I went to Duluth High School!" Under the circumstances, it was an ideal situation, and it really brought my spirits up. This whole process has been difficult. I've never gone through anything like this before. But once the doctor said, "Look, you've gotta wear glasses," I said, "Fine, let's do it and move on."

CT: Have you kept off the weight you lost before the season? How many pounds is that?

McCANN: I have kept it off, and it feels great. I'm at 225 pounds right now, and I weighed about 248 at the end of last season.



PHOTOS: NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

The legendary Babe Ruth played for only three teams in his career - the same three teams that will meet at Turner Field June 23-28 for what should be six days of very entertaining interleague games.

WHY ALL THE FUSS?

The Yankees And Red Sox Will Bring A Lot Of Fans - And Storylines - To Turner Field

BY GARY CARUSO

IT MAY ONLY BE JUNE, but there will be a buzz comparable to post-season excitement at Turner Field late this month when two bullies from the highly competitive American League East come calling. That would be the New York Yankees (June 23-25) and Boston Red Sox (June 26-28), of course, and hordes of their far-flung fans are sure to pack the ballpark.

Why is this such a big deal? Well, there are plenty of reasons, not the least of which are all those fans, who will make a major contribution to the Braves' coffers.

For the ninth straight year, the Yankees have the largest payroll in baseball. USA Today put it at $201.4 million to open the season. The Red Sox are fourth at $121.7 million. Forbes magazine values the worth of the Yankees' franchise at $1.5 billion, the highest in baseball, of course. The Red Sox check in third at $833 million in spite of playing in ancient - and relatively small - Fenway Park.

Money aside, the Yankees and the Red Sox are two of the most successful and historic franchises in all of professional sports. Both were charter members of the American League in 1901, though the Yankees were known as the Baltimore Orioles at the time, relocating to New York two years later as the Highlanders (the Yankees nickname originated in 1913).

The Yankees have won more World Series than any other franchise (26 out of 39 times in it). They won the Fall Classic four times in five years (1996, '98-2000) but have been dry since then.

The Red Sox won the first World Series in 1903 but went through one of the longest droughts in history from 1918 until 2004, then won again in 2007 to give them two of the last five World Championships. That success spawned unbridled devotion throughout the so-called Red Sox Nation, making a ticket to a game at Fenway the toughest to get in baseball. As this was written, the Red Sox were working on a major league record string of 483 consecutive sellouts at Fenway, dating to May 15, 2003, and there's no end in sight.

The Braves are no slouches when it comes to history. In fact, they pre-date the Yankees and Red Sox by more than a quarter century. In spite of playing in different leagues, there are quite a few threads that tie them together. Here's a look at some of those.

THE BEGINNING

The Braves are directly linked to the Red Sox because they shared the same hometown for 52 seasons. Though the Braves were there first, they eventually lost the popularity battle and escaped to Milwaukee in 1953.

As can now be seen on the outfield wall at Turner Field, the Braves are the "oldest continuously operating franchise in pro sports." A charter member of the National League in 1876 as the Boston Red Stockings, the club actually was born five years earlier when the National Association was formed in 1871.

Though the Braves have not called Boston home for more than half a century, there's still an active fan club there - the Boston

Braves Historical Association (BBHA) - that holds an annual reunion/banquet. When the Braves played their first interleague games in Boston in 1997, members of the BBHA and the Atlanta-based Braves 400 Club attended games together and held a "Braves Birthplace Reunion."

THE BABE

Though it is impossible to accurately compare players from different eras, fans and the media love to do it, and it creates a great deal of interest in baseball. Furthermore, it is a harmless exercise, so let the arguments continue!

Regardless of whether or not Babe Ruth prevails in any particular discussion in which players are ranked, there can be no questioning his legend. He is an unrivaled No. 1 in that department. In spite of playing in a relative cave man era of communications, The Bambino was larger than the game when he played (1914-35) and remains so today.

Known primarily as a Yankee, Ruth actually played for three teams in his career. He played his first six seasons - mainly as a great pitcher - for the Red Sox before he was sold to the Yankees. There he became the game's most-feared slugger. In 1935, however, Ruth played the last 28 games of his career and hit his final six home runs as a Brave.

The Ruth connection with the Braves was re-engaged in the 1970s, when Hank Aaron pursued and eventually broke The Babe's all-time career home run record of 714.

THE BALLPARK

Fenway Park, the storied home of the Red Sox opened its gates in 1912, and Babe Ruth made his major league debut there in 1914. The big news in Boston and around baseball in 1914, however, was the Braves - the "Miracle Braves," as they were being called. On July 18, the Braves were dead last in the eight-team National League, but they were 51-16 (.761) in the second half to win the pennant and then swept the heavily favored Philadelphia Athletics in a four-game World Series.

With Bostonians clamoring to see the Braves in September, the team moved its home games to Fenway Park that had 33,871 seats, three times more than the 11,000-seat South End Grounds where they normally played. They also completed the "miracle" there, beating Philadelphia in the final two games of the Series.

Once the Braves moved into Braves Field, that seated 43,500, they returned the favor, allowing the Red Sox to play World Series games there in 1915 and 1916.

As late as 1946, the Braves were back at Fenway. The seats at Braves Field were painted for the start of the season, but they weren't dry for the first game, so many fans left with paint on their clothes. The remainder of the series was moved to Fenway to make sure the paint dried!

THE SERIES

Other than the 1914 World Series championship in Boston and the 1995 championship in Atlanta, the only other World Championship in Braves history came in 1957 at the expense of the mighty Yankees of Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra.

Lou Burdette, once Yankees property, pitched three complete game victories to the tune of an 0.67 ERA and earned Series MVP honors. Hank Aaron led all hitters on both teams with a .393 average, and when Berra told him at home plate that the trademark on his bat wasn't facing up, Aaron replied, "I didn't come up there to read."

The Braves applied the final and most-painful blow to the proud Yankees by winning Game 7 at Yankee Stadium, 5-0, behind Burdette's second shutout in 72 hours.

THE MANAGERS

There are several interesting managerial connections between the Braves and Yankees, not the least of which is Bobby Cox, who originally signed as a player with the Yanks and played and managed for them in the minors, as well as played and coached for them in the majors. In fact, the Braves originally hired him from the Yankees in 1978.

Hall of Famer Casey Stengel managed both the Braves and the Yankees, the latter with considerably more success than he had with the Braves (373-491, .432 from 1938-43). He won 10 pennants and seven World Series with the Yankees in a span of just 12 years.

Another man to manage both teams is current Dodgers manager Joe Torre. He followed Cox's first term as Braves manager, taking over in 1982 and immediately won a division title. He brought Atlanta in second the next two seasons, but that wasn't good enough for owner Ted Turner, who dismissed him. From 1996-2007, Torre won six pennants and four World Series for the Yankees.

THE TRADES

The Yankees got the best of the Braves in the World Series three times - 1958, 1996 and 1999. But the Braves can take some solace in the fact that they outfoxed the Yankees in two of the better trades in franchise history.

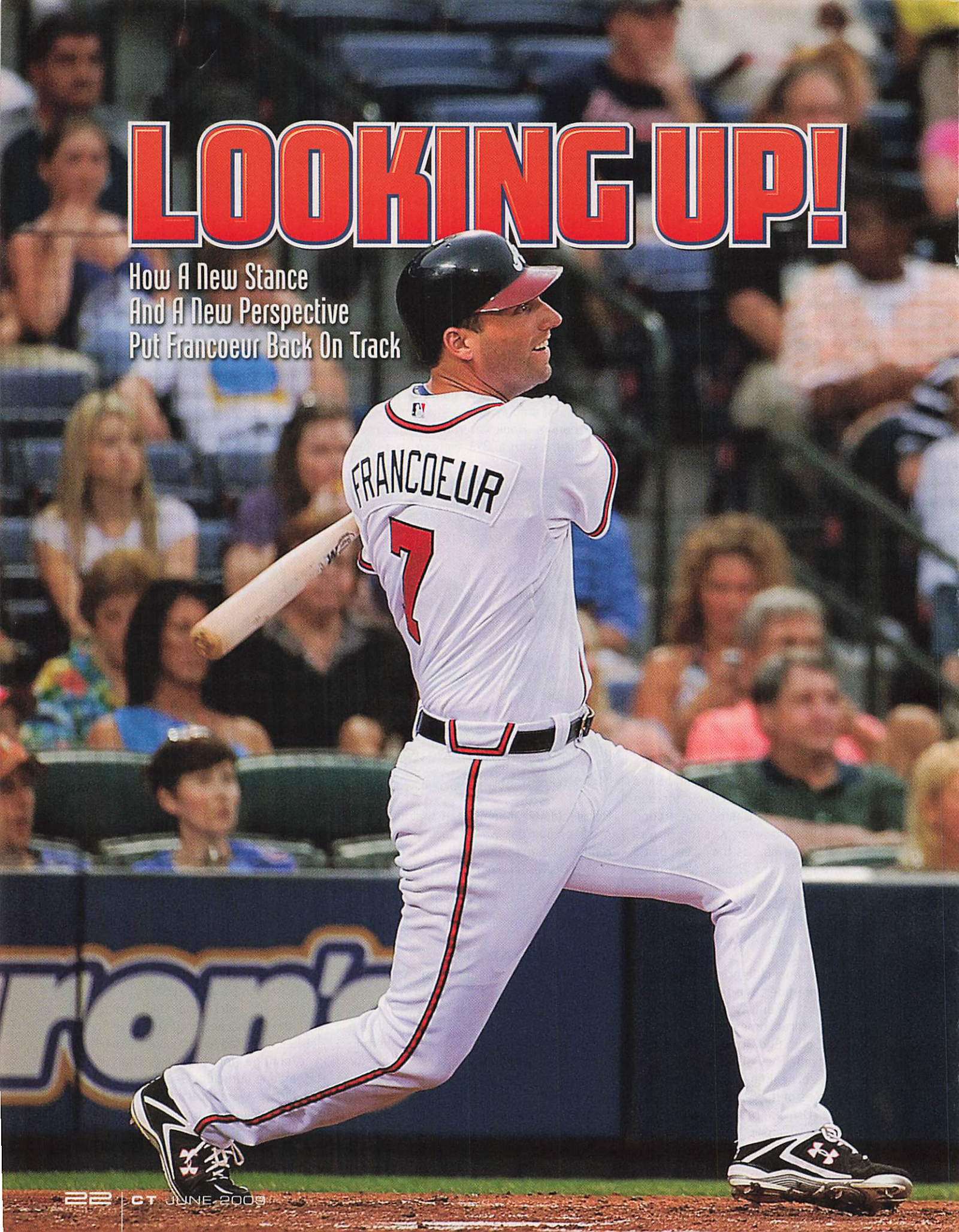
On Aug. 30, 1951, the Braves sent Johnny Sain, one of the best righthanders they ever employed to the Yankees in exchange for Lou Burdette. Sain was well past his prime, though he did give the Yankees a couple of years of good service, mainly as a reliever. Burdette, who had just 1 1/3 innings of major league service at the time, became one of the finest righthanders in Braves history, not to mention the greatest World Series hero in franchise history.

Ten years before that deal, on Dec. 9, 1941, the Braves acquired outfielder Tommy Holmes, who had no big league experience, in exchange for first baseman Buddy Hassett and outfielder Gene Moore. Hassett and Moore were practically finished, but Holmes became a Braves Hall of Famer who held the NL record with a 37-game hitting streak until Pete Rose broke it in 1978.

In 1914, the so-called "Miracle Braves" of Boston went from dead last on July 18 to winning the pennant and then the first World Championship in franchise history, completing their unlikely run by winning the last two games of the World Series at Fenway Park, which was loaned to them by the Red Sox.

LOOKING UP!

How A New Stance And A New Perspective Put Francoeur Back On Track



BY JON COOPER

THE SMILE IS BACK on Jeff Francoeur's face. It's an easy smile, the kind that displays confidence in where he is - and in where he's going.

It's a confidence that comes from rediscovering his identity as a hitter. That mission required the maturity to admit there was a problem, attacking it by bending the ears of the likes of Chipper Jones, Terry Pendleton, and hitting guru (and Texas Rangers hitting coach) Rudy Jaramillo, then putting in hours of work in the batting cage to implement their advice.

The results are getting rave reviews.

"It's just a complete turnaround from last year," said Chipper. "He's a lot more confident, he's a lot more fundamentally sound at the plate, and he's getting results because of it. He took it upon himself to get with some guys that really know how to hit and can teach the fundamentals of hitting. He listened and he applied it to his swing, and it's paying off."

Francoeur's determination was fueled as much by a desire to regain his place in the heart of the Braves' batting order as it was by seeking to restore his good name with Braves fans.

His reputation as "The Golden Boy" was tarnished by a nightmarish 2008 season, when he hit only .239 with 11 homers and 71 RBIs. He fizzled in areas where the team depended on him — a .210 batting average against left-handed pitching, .192 with runners in scoring position, including .182 with the bases loaded — then balked when told the team wanted him to straighten things out at Double-A Mississippi (he spent three games there).

The first step in rediscovering himself physically as a hitter was rediscovering himself mentally.

"The number-one thing was getting away this off-season, going on some trips, having some fun, playing some golf, and just getting baseball out of my mind," said Francoeur, who turned 25 on Jan. 8. "That was probably the best thing I did, because when I got back, I was ready to go for this year, ready to get to where I wanted to be.

"Anyone who knows me knows I wasn't going to accept what happened last year," he continued. "For me, it was about getting back and putting numbers up like I used to, but also being a different player, scoring runs, walking more, being on base for other guys. That's what I want to do."

His road to recovery began in Texas. On the advice of former teammates Mark Teixeira and Mark DeRosa, he hit in front of Jaramillo, who has produced 16 Silver Slugger winners over his career with the Houston Astros and Texas Rangers, and whose protégés include Teixeira, Jeff Bagwell, Juan Gonzalez, "Pudge" Rodriguez and Michael Young.

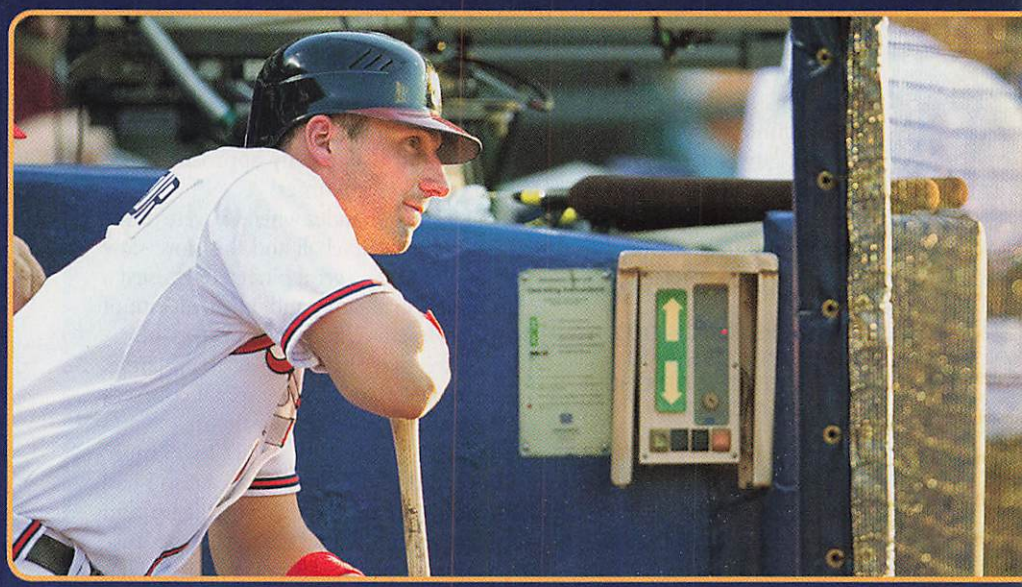
The first order of business was changing his stance.

"I got a little bit more spread, and I got my hands a little higher," he said. "It's enabled me to go straight to the ball with my hands.

"[Jaramillo's] got like a rubber-band approach, where he talks about getting your foot down and your hands back at the same time," he added. "He says it leads you short to the ball and you're able to see the ball. The first thing I asked was about plate discipline and seeing pitches. He said, 'If you don't have a good base, you're not going to have much plate discipline. If you have a good approach to hitting, you'll be able to see the ball deeper and have a better understanding of what you want to do.'"

Francoeur stressed that Pendleton has been completely supportive of him going outside the organization to find a new style.

"T.P.'s played this game long enough that he knows you have to do what you have to do to get your career going," he said. "I couldn't ask for a better hitting coach to understand and also realize now that he knows what I want and work with it. During the game, you can watch me sometimes look over at him to see if I'm going out too soon, and he knows what I want to do."



PHOTOS: ATLANTA BRAVES

So far, the new Francoeur has been doing a lot of what he wants to do this season.

While he still likes to first-ball hit, as he did in the season opener when he blasted the first pitch he saw from Philadelphia's Brett Myers into the left-field seats at Citizens Bank Park, he isn't the first-ball-swinging Francoeur of years passed.

Through the first 26 games of the season (heading into games of May 6), the majority of Francoeur's hits had been on the first pitch, and he was hitting .474 when first-ball swinging. But he's also sporting a .500 average on 2-1 pitches and a .313 clip on 2-2. He's even hitting on pitcher's counts, batting .375 on 0-2.

Francoeur's improved batting eye has cut his strikeouts-to-walks ratio to near 2:1 (nine strikeouts vs. four walks), as opposed to the near 4:1 career ratio coming into the season.

Besides being more discerning, the rightfielder has again become dependable in the clutch. Entering the season, his 120 two-out RBIs ranked 12th-best among active players. This year, he was hitting .379 with runners in scoring position, including six extra-base hits, good for 15 RBIs. He's 2-for-2 with three RBIs with the bases loaded. With two outs, he was batting .433. And with two outs and runners in scoring position, Francoeur was hitting a scorching .533 (8-for-17), with eight hits (four of them for extra bases) and 10 RBIs.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

BATTER UP!

MY APPROACH IS TO TRY TO REMAIN AGGRESSIVE

I DO CONSIDER MYSELF a type of power pitcher that throws a lot of strikes. I know that I compile a lot of strikeouts. That's been the way it is since I was in the minor leagues, but the number isn't really that important for me. I wish I struck out fewer guys and threw fewer pitches in a game!

Obviously, strikeouts are a good number in the stats, but it wouldn't bother me to get groundballs or popups to get guys out. When you're out there, it's all about winning games and getting outs any way you can.

Going after batters and staying aggressive is something that you learn over the course of your career. You learn to go after guys, no matter what the situation is.

Some guys pitch differently when they have a man on. I used to be that way when I started pitching. I would try to make a perfect pitch with someone on base. But now I know I don't have to. You just have to stay aggressive, and that's what I try to do.

I try to keep my approach consistent. Obviously, there are times when you have to unintentionally/intentionally walk someone, or you might pitch carefully to a guy because someone is on deck. But usually, my approach is the same - aggressive. And that gets me into trouble sometimes!

I learned that really slow curveball from Livan Hernandez when we were teammates in Montreal. He used to throw this regular curveball and this slow, slow curveball, and it's a great pitch. I only use it a few times in a game, and it gets me out of trouble because hitters don't expect it.

> "I WISH I STRUCK OUT FEWER GUYS AND THREW FEWER PITCHES IN A GAME!"

I have five pitches - a fastball, curve, slider, cutter and changeup. Of course, I change speeds with all of them.

When I signed, I threw 87 to 89 mph. I was just 17 years old and weighed 170 pounds. I didn't have power, so I had to learn how to be a finesse type pitcher. As I matured, I got bigger and stronger and started throwing harder. That was an advantage for me, because I wasn't relying on only strength. I knew how to pitch with more finesse. That helped me a lot.

I don't really watch a lot of film. If I do, I'm not watching what I'm doing, my mechanics, unless I'm really struggling. I'm watching the hitters and how they're making or not making adjustments. If I watch anything, it would be the hitters we're about to face. But not of them hitting against me - mainly because I haven't faced hitters in the National League for a few years.

A few starts before mine, I might watch a guy who has pitches like mine pitching against the team we're about the face. The next time we're playing the Mets, I might watch my game against them.

Even before I signed, my favorite pitcher was Greg Maddux. I always watched his games. When I pitched in Montreal and he pitched against us, it was great to watch him. The way he changed speeds and used his fastball impressed me. He wasn't blowing hitters away. I've had more than a few pitching coaches tell me that the most important pitch is a fastball, and Maddux used it unbelievably well. The same with Tom Glavine.

As far as wins and losses, there are things I can control on my own and things I can't. My job is to go out and try to shut the opposition down, and that's about it. If they get a bloop hit, that's part of the game, because sometimes they're going to hit it hard right at people.

I've always said if you pitch your game and pitch well, it's going to go your way more often than not. I'm philosophical about it, because that's really all I can do.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

His utilization of right field (eight of his first 29 hits have gone to the opposite field) also has made a big difference.

"He went from trying to hit the ball around the left field foul pole to driving the ball the other way and trying to be a complete .300 average hitter," said Jones.

"I think last year he got a little 'pull-happy,'" said Francoeur's long-time friend Brian McCann. "He's really using all fields. He's in a good hitter's position to hit before the ball is out of the pitcher's hand. Last year, he was rushing everything. This year, he's more relaxed, and he's using the whole field."

Another sign that Francoeur is returning to form is his domination of left-handed pitching. He's hitting .382 against them so far (through May 5). That right-handed thunder is vital reinforcement for a Braves team that saw more left-handed pitching in 2008 than any other team in the National League (Behind The Numbers, May '09 CT).

"The lefty-righty matchup is a big deal," said Francoeur, who came into 2009 as a career .291 hitter against southpaws. "It's important that I get back to being that guy in the lineup that can hit fourth against lefties and crush them."

Francoeur has shown that he can bat in the run-producing spots in the lineup - having batted fourth, fifth and sixth this season - and while his lowest average so far has been in the fifth spot, he's looking forward to making that his customary slot and thriving as protection for McCann, once the catcher overcomes early-season vision trouble.

"I like being a run-producer," he said. "I like being up with guys on base, and I like getting a chance to drive them in. The key is going to be getting Mac and getting our lineup back together. If we can get everybody on the same page, we can start rolling."

Perhaps the most important thing Francoeur has learned is that a season like 2008 could happen to him. His March/April numbers this year are similar to those of '08, but this time around, he feels better equipped to handle adversity and not to let such a drastic slide happen again.

"I feel comfortable," he said. "I think early on I was kind of putting a little pressure on myself to do too much. Then I got in the swing of things and relaxed.

He broke into that smile, and then added, "I tell people, after what I went through last year, I'm just glad to be in the lineup and glad to be playing."

MR. GOOD GUY

One area where Jeff Francoeur has always excelled is giving back to Braves fans.

"What happened last year was tough, but it's not changing who I am as a person," he said. "I love being able to help and be a guy that this community can look to, especially in tough times. Whether it's a blood drive or Toys For Tots or Children's HealthCare of Atlanta, that's my No. 1 priority. My wife, Catie, and I take pride in doing that and being able to help kids."

Among the groups and events to which Francoeur lends time are:

- Dream House: He's a spokesman for Dream House for Medically Fragile Children and has teamed with Delta Air Lines, which donates 25,000 sky miles for every home run he hits. Those sky miles are used to fly families of medically fragile children around the country as needed.

- The AFLAC Cancer Center: Last season he participated in AFLAC Day at Turner Field, when the Braves hosted infirmed children in a luxury suite for a game. He visited the kids after batting practice and following the game.

- Christmas Bag Giveaway: Teaming with Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and 790 the Zone, he and Catie delivered Christmas bags to needy families around the Atlanta area.

- Tumornators: He donates money for every home run he hits to Tumornators, a group that raises money for the Children's Tumor Foundation. He also has appeared at key group events.

Francoeur's also donated time to the Gwinnett County School system, frequently speaks to school and church groups, and even helped Georgia Tech raise money for its baseball program by speaking at the team's benefit dinner in February. And as ChopTalk readers know, he's as accessible for pictures, autographs or just a handshake as any player in the majors.

- JON COOPER

AROUND BASEBALL

BY KEN ROSENTHAL

DODGERS CAN SURVIVE MANNY'S SUSPENSION

THE DODGERS need not worry about losing **Manny Ramirez** for 50 games. The other NL West lineups, with the possible exception of the Rockies', are downright feeble. The Padres, Diamondbacks and Giants are three of the lowest-scoring teams in the league. Their hitters are so impatient, one rival coach says, that pitchers do not need to panic when they fall behind in the count – or give in.

Watching **Alfredo Amezaga** fill in at shortstop for the Marlins, it was difficult not to be struck by how much better a fielder he appeared to be than **Hanley Ramirez**, who was out with a bruised right wrist. Staying with Amezaga at short, moving Ramirez to third, and using **Emilio Bonifacio** in Amezaga's super-utility role could improve the Marlins' defense significantly. But the Marlins will not ask Ramirez, their franchise player, to change positions in the middle of a season.

It's rather surprising that the Cardinals got off to such a strong start, considering that the left side of their infield was something of a mess. Shortstop **Khalil Greene** was an early disappointment, particularly defensively. **Troy Glaus**, who underwent arthroscopic shoulder surgery in January, is not expected to return before the All-Star break. The tag team of **Joe Thurston** and **Brian Barden** performed respectably at third, and **David Freese** remained an option at Triple-A.

Great practical joke by the Mariners' **Ken Griffey Jr.** in response to new manager **Don Wakamatsu**'s rule that the players must travel in coats and ties. Griffey bought two sets of his ties for his teammates to wear, one that had his picture on it and one that had Wakamatsu's.

The Phillies pondered dropping the slumping **Jimmy Rollins** out of the leadoff spot, but Rollins frequently was hitting into bad luck – an explanation supported by his poor batting average on balls in play. For Rollins, the statistic is particularly meaningful, because he does not walk much.

When **Bryan Price** resigned as Diamondbacks pitching coach, it appeared he was acting solely out of loyalty to his close friend, **Bob Melvin**. But Price, according to a source, also had reservations about working for Melvin's replacement, first-time manager **A.J. Hinch**. Price, one of the game's most respected pitching coaches, might have remained with the club under another manager.

First baseman **Adrian Gonzalez** increased his home-run totals from 24 to 30 to 36 in his first three years with the Padres, and hit nine this season by April 29. "Put him in Cincy or Philadelphia, and he might hit 50-plus," said Padres GM **Kevin Towers**.

Let's see, the Cubs signed utility infielders **Aaron Miles** as a free agent and traded for **Ryan Freel**. Maybe at the trade deadline, they should just bring back the original, former Brave **Mark DeRosa**. Lefthander **Cliff Lee** will be the Indians' player most in demand if the team continues to sputter, but DeRosa – a free agent at the end of the season – also will be attractive to contending clubs.

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM

Greg Maddux, who won 133 games and one Cy Young Award for the Cubs (1986-92, 2004-06), addresses the Wrigley Field faithful in a ceremony that will be duplicated at Turner Field when the Braves retire his number.

STEPHEN GREEN / CHICAGO CUBS

THE RIGHT STUFF

Maddux Will Receive The Ultimate Honor When "31" Is Taken Out Of Circulation July 17

BY GARY CARUSO

THERE ARE NEARLY twice as many players enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame (229) as have had their uniform numbers retired (136). On July 17 during a pre-game ceremony at Turner Field (7:30 p.m. vs. Mets), the Braves will bestow what could be considered the ultimate honor for a ballplayer on Greg Maddux. Considering only five Braves have previously been so recognized, the occasion will be a landmark in franchise history.

Of course, it'll be "old hat" to Maddux, who also had his No. 31 retired May 3 at Wrigley Field by the Cubs. They may have gotten the jump on the Braves in that department, but when Maddux's plaque at Cooperstown is unveiled in five years, his likeness will be wearing a Braves cap since 37 percent of his 355 lifetime wins and one Cy Young Award came in Chicago compared to 57 percent and three Cy Youngs in Atlanta.

Unofficially, Maddux is just the seventh player to have his number retired by more than one team. The others are Nolan Ryan (Ranger, Angels and Astros), Hank Aaron (Braves and Brewers), Frank Robinson (Reds and Orioles), Reggie Jackson (A's and Yankees), Rollie Fingers (A's and Brewers) and Carlton Fisk (Red Sox and White Sox). The Yankees and Mets accorded Casey Stengel the distinction as a manager.

Maddux, who retired this past off-season, ranks eighth all-time in career wins. In 11 years with the Braves (1993-2003), he was 194-88 with a 2.63 ERA. He won the last three of his four straight Cy Youngs in 1993-95 and was on his only World Championship club in 1995 with Atlanta. Maddux set club records for career winning percentage (.688) and ERA, and also holds the Braves record for lowest ERA in a season (1.54 in 1994).

Following is a synopsis of the careers of the five Braves whose numbers have officially been taken out of circulation, listed in the order that they received the honor. They are followed by Jackie Robinson, whose number is retired by all teams.

WARREN SPAHN

Number Retired - 1965

The winningest lefthander in baseball history, Warren Spahn won 363 games, fifth all-time, and all but the last seven of that total came with the Braves (1942, '46-64). He didn't win his first game until age 25, following three decorated years of U.S. Army combat duty in World War II. He went on to register 13 seasons of 20 or more victories, a National League record. The 1957 Major League Cy Young Award winner, he pitched two no-hitters, at ages 39 and 40. In 1963, at age 42, he was 23-7 with seven shutouts, a 2.60 ERA, and led the league in complete games (22) for the seventh straight season - a major league record. Among Spahn's many records are most home runs by an NL pitcher (35) and most doubleplays started by an ML pitcher (82).

EDDIE MATHEWS

Number Retired - 1969

The only Brave to play for the franchise in Boston, Milwaukee and Atlanta, Eddie Mathews was one of the greatest third basemen of all-time and one of the game's most-feared left-handed sluggers. When he reached the 500-home run club in 1967, he was only its seventh member and the first NL lefty. He finished with 512 home runs but was considered a threat to break Babe Ruth's career home run record long before anyone had the same thought about Hank Aaron. In 1953, the Braves' first season in Milwaukee, he led the majors with 47 home runs at age 21. His 10th-inning home run won Game 4 of the 1957 World Series, the pivotal moment that led to the Braves upsetting the Yankees. He and Aaron combined for 863 home runs as teammates, a major league record.

HANK AARON

Number Retired - 1975

Perhaps the greatest player of all-time and certainly the greatest Brave in history, Hank Aaron hit 733 of his record 755 career home runs with the Braves from 1954-74. He's best known for hitting home run No. 715 on April 8, 1974, to break Babe Ruth's lifetime record. However, "Hammerin' Hank" was much more than a slugger. He was a superb all-around outfielder who won two batting titles and four Gold Gloves and stole 20 or more bases six times to go along with his four home run championships and an incomparable list of records. No other player in history was as consistently excellent as Aaron over such a long period of time. Though he never hit 50 home runs in a season, Aaron holds the major league record of 15 seasons with 30 or more homers. In 1957, he was the league's MVP and batted .393 in the World Series victory over the Yankees. In 23 seasons in the majors, he made the All-Star team in all but his first and last seasons.

PHIL NIEKRO

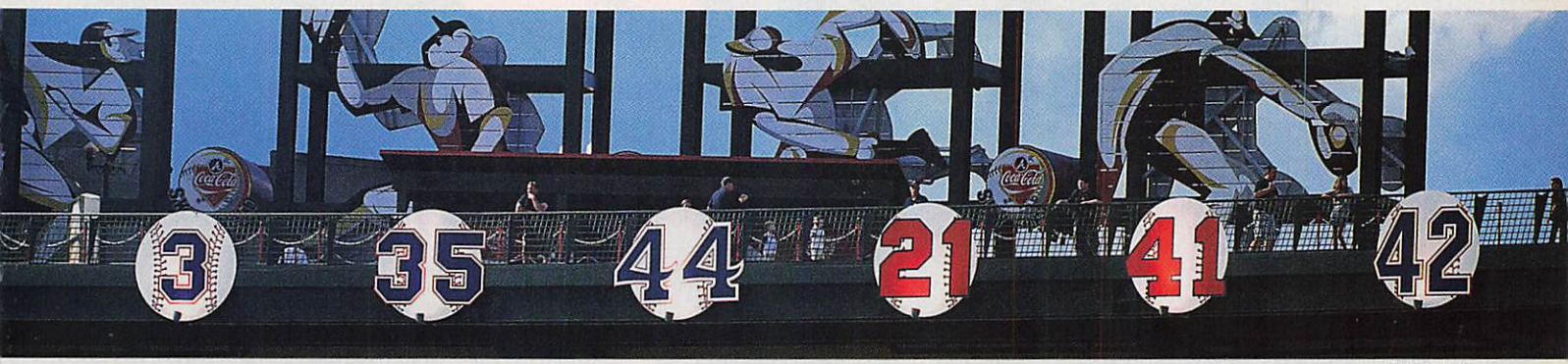
Number Retired - 1984

The last player to spend the bulk of his career as a Brave and then be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown (1997), Phil Niekro won 318 games in his career - 268 as a Brave from 1964-83. A master of the rare and elusive knuckleball, he pitched the Braves' first no-hitter in Atlanta, beating San Diego, 9-0, on Aug. 5, 1973 at Atlanta Stadium. He helped the Braves win division titles in 1969 and 1982, and in 1967, he led the NL with what then was a franchise-record 1.87 ERA. Niekro had three seasons of 20 or more victories and established numerous club records. In seven seasons from 1974-80, he led the league in innings four times and never finished out of the top five. In 1982, at age 43, he was 17-4 to lead the majors with an .810 winning percentage. An intense competitor, Niekro won five Gold Gloves and teamed with his younger brother, Joe, for a major league record 539 victories.

DALE MURPHY

Number Retired - 1994

One of the most beloved and most respected men ever to play in the majors, Murphy is the only one of the five Braves who had their numbers retired before Maddux that's not enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. He is, of course, a member of the Braves Hall of Fame. He hit 398 career home runs (371 as a Brave) and won back-to-back National League MVP Awards (1982-83). Primarily an outfielder with Atlanta from 1976-90, the reverent and gentlemanly Murphy strung together four consecutive seasons of at least 36 home runs and 100 RBIs from 1982-85 and hit a career-best 44 home runs in 1987. He played in 740 consecutive games - 13th all-time - from Sept. 26, 1981, through July 9, 1986, the longest streak among active players at that time and one that has since been passed only by Cal Ripken Jr. and Miguel Tejada.



ATLANTA BRAVES

JACKIE ROBINSON

Number Retired By MLB - 1997

Jackie Robinson spent his entire career (1947-56) with the Brooklyn Dodgers, but his number was retired throughout baseball to honor him for integrating the majors in 1947. However, it should be noted that he also was a fantastic player who compiled a .311 career batting average. He was NL Rookie of the Year in '47 and won the league batting title and the MVP in 1949.

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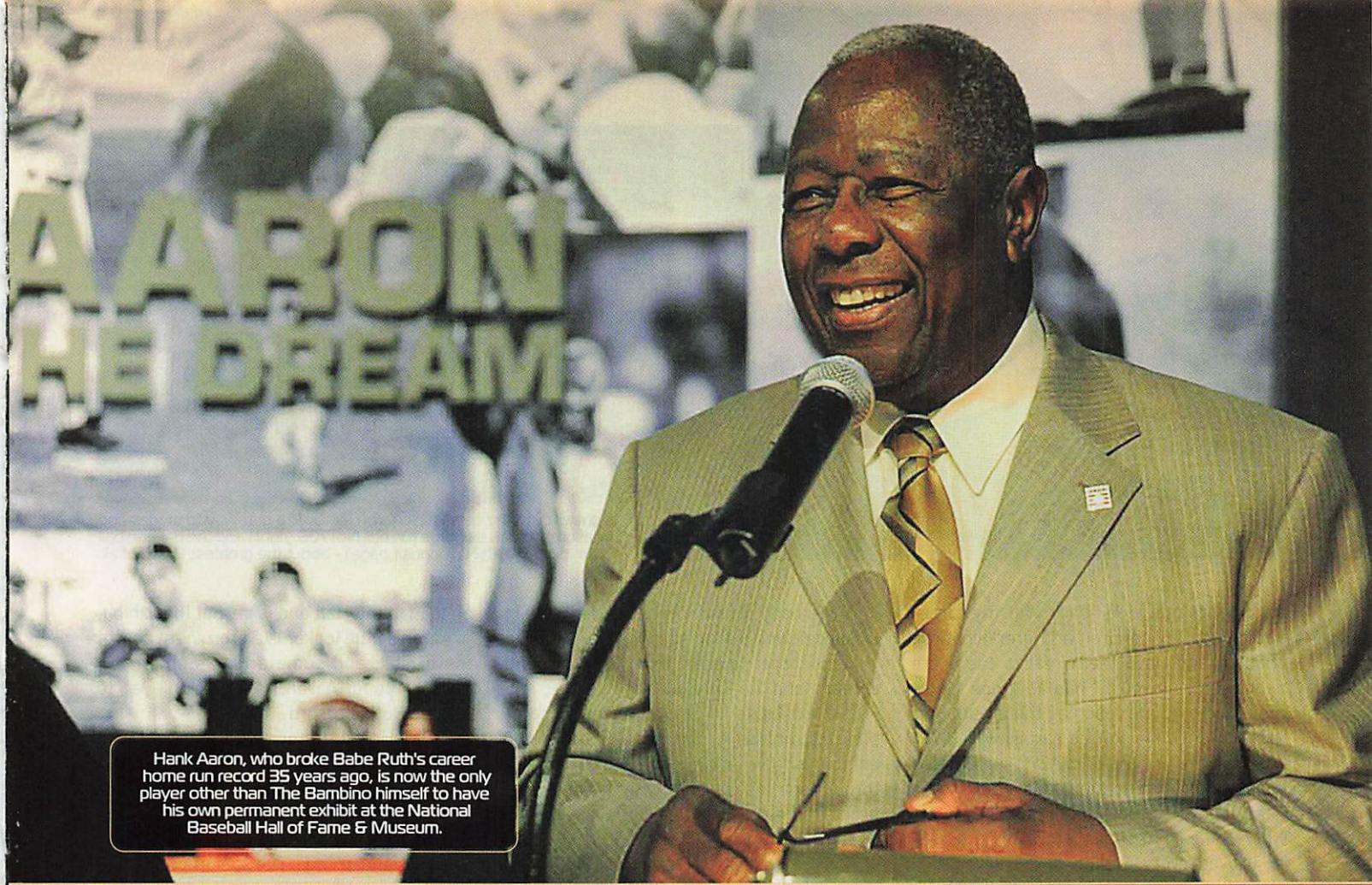

Hank Aaron, who broke Babe Ruth's career home run record 35 years ago, is now the only player other than The Bambino himself to have his own permanent exhibit at the National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum.

TRIBUTE TO A LEGEND

Aaron Honored At Cooperstown With Second-Of-A-Kind "Permanent" Exhibit

PHOTOS: MILO STEWART JR./NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

BY P.J. HARMER

Hank Aaron is still chasing the dream, 35 years after he broke Babe Ruth's career home run record.

The greatest Brave of all was the main event April 25 at the National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum in picturesque Cooperstown, N.Y., for the unveiling of a permanent exhibit based on his life and career titled "Hank Aaron: Chasing the Dream." The only other player to have a "permanent" exhibit, essentially a room of its own, at the museum is Ruth.

Aaron helped cut the ceremonial ribbon in front of a crowd of about 200 fans who jammed into a small area on the third floor at the museum. Those fans lined the steps from the first to the third floor before the event with the hopes of getting into the ceremony.

Dressed in a sharp tan suit, the 75-year-old Aaron was joined in the ribbon cutting by his wife of 35 years, Billye; Bill Bartholomay, chairman emeritus of the Atlanta Braves; Hall of Fame president Jeff Idelson; Erik Strohl, the Hall's senior director of exhibits and collections; and Mary Quinn, the Hall's director of exhibits and design.

"Hank Aaron defines Hall of Fame excellence, and 'Chasing the Dream' represents the journey all major league players experience throughout their careers," Idelson said during his opening remarks. "For Hank Aaron, it represents not only the quiet grace and dignity he brought to the ballpark everyday, but the chase for immortality in the face of tremendous adversity in pursuing the most hallowed record in all of American sport."

Aaron seemed genuinely moved by the exhibit. He smiled throughout the unveiling, sharing a few words on occasion with his wife. After his speech - which lasted less than four minutes - he calmly answered questions from members of the media who surrounded him as he sat in front of the Atlanta Braves uniform and batting helmet he wore when he hit No. 715.

"All of it means an awful lot to me," Aaron said. "The home runs, the runs batted in, the runs scored - everything means an

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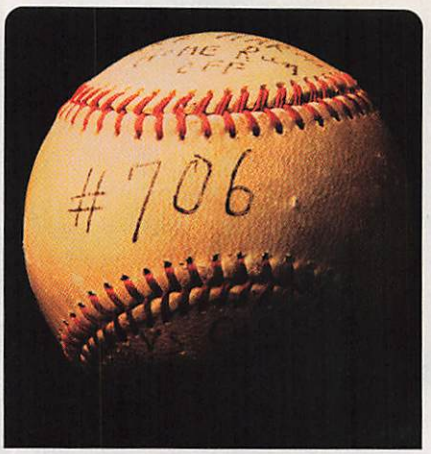


This entrance to the new Hank Aaron exhibit is a gateway to stories and treasures - such as home run ball No. 706 (right) and the bat and ball from his 3,000th hit (opposit page) - about the greatest Brave of all.

awful lot to me. I look back over my career and talk to my children and grandchildren about it and have them realize there are people helping you... I had all these teammates helping me reaching the dream."

He finished his storied career with 3,771 hits, 755 home runs and 2,297 runs batted in. But his career started in the Negro Leagues with the Indianapolis Clowns, where he said he made $150 a month.

"I loved every minute of it," he said. "I played with some great ballplayers. Unfortunately, they were much older than I was, and they didn't get a chance to play (in the major leagues)."

His major league career began with the Milwaukee Braves in 1954. Aaron earned the National League Rookie of the Year Award that season. He won his lone NL Most Valuable Player Award in 1957. A first-ballot inductee into the Hall of Fame in 1982, Aaron participated in 25 All-Star games over his 23-year career in the big leagues (two All-Star games were played in each season from 1959-1962).

The road wasn't always easy, however.

Aaron received hate mail and came under a lot of scrutiny from some of the public as he closed on baseball's most-cherished record - Ruth's home run mark.

Through the hard times, he said he found support from his late mother, Estella.

"She always told me that things I have no control over, don't worry about," he said. "Just (to keep) doing what I had to do and eventually things would fall into place."

Aaron became the all-time home run leader on April 8, 1974, at Atlanta Stadium when he hit No. 715 off Al Downing of the Los Angeles Dodgers. The record ball is not on display in the new exhibit, because it's at the Braves Museum at Turner Field.

"Eventually it will probably be here in Cooperstown," Aaron said.

Many other pieces from his baseball career - and life - are on display.

The exhibit took nearly a year to complete, Strohl said. The front part of the exhibit shows many images of Aaron throughout his career, with large words proclaiming it "Hank Aaron: Chasing the Dream."

A wood post and bricks from his childhood home in Mobile, Ala., - that is now being converted into a museum itself - are on display, as well as the bats and balls Aaron used to hit home runs 500, 600 and his Ruth-tying 714. Also, the bat and ball from his 3,000th hit are on display.

His last home run ball - No. 755 - also is on loan to the Hall and is part of the exhibit.

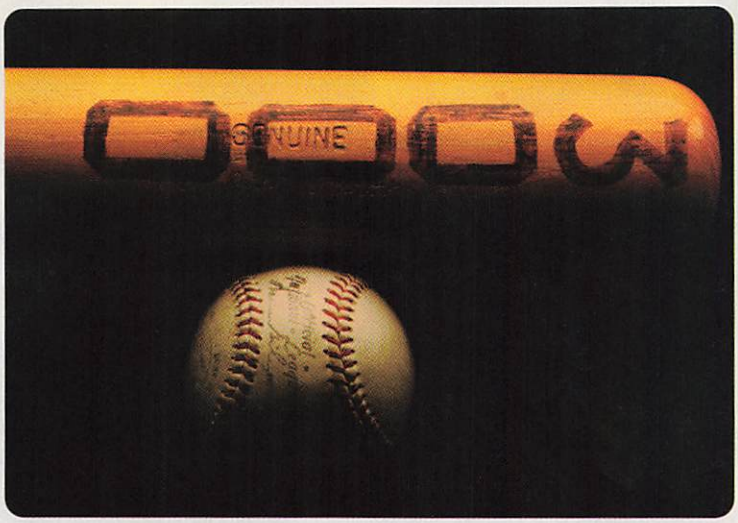
Aaron's blue locker is a prominent part of the exhibit, and some artifacts show how hard it was for Aaron, as a black player, to pursue Ruth's record.

A hate-mail letter, with harsh racial overtones, is on display. There is also a letter in full support of Aaron.

"I want (people) to understand when they come in here and look at these exhibits and things I've accomplished in the 23 years I played baseball," Aaron said, "is that they, too, no matter if it's as a baseball player or a pianist or whatever they want to do, that they,too, can accomplish and reach their goals and chase their dream."

Many of the exhibit's artifacts were

Scissors for all (L-R): Erik Strohl and Mary Quinn of the Hall of Fame's exhibits division, Braves chairman emeritus Bill Bartholomay, Billye and Hank Aaron, and Jeff Idelson, president of the Hall of Fame.



donated by Aaron, including his 1957 World Series championship ring. Aaron said the items belong with the Hall of Fame so fans can enjoy pieces of baseball history.

The unveiling of the exhibit was the centerpiece of a day designed around Aaron. Following the exhibit opening, a special "Voices of the Game" roundtable discussion was held, with Aaron being the featured guest.

The Hall also held a screening of "Hank Aaron: Chasing the Dream," a 120-minute documentary that earned an Academy Award nomination in 1996.

Aaron said the exhibit ranks with his Hall of Fame induction in 1982 among his personal thrills.

"It makes me feel quite proud. When I was inducted in 1982, it was something I think I looked at and said I finally arrived," he said. "Now you look at it and you say you met another plateau. I think that people are finally realizing that (I wasn't) just home runs... I was really proud of the fact I was able to steal bases and play the outfield."

Aaron seemed to take special pride in his post-baseball activities, which include founding the Chasing the Dream Foundation with his wife. The foundation helps underprivileged children ages 9-12.

"I am tremendously proud of the fact that we have helped so many children to chase their dreams, because as a young kid growing up in Mobile, Ala., I, too, had a dream to chase," he said. "And that was to one day be a professional baseball player.

"The home runs, runs batted in, pennant winning, All-Star games and things like that is something most children can read about," Aaron said. "But the most important thing I think you achieve is after you finish your career. That's the foundation my wife and I have started many years ago... When you see these kids perform and try and reach their goal, it brings tears to your eyes."

Bartholomay seemed thrilled throughout the event and said it was a perfect day for Aaron to be honored. The sun was shining and the temperatures were in the 80s, which is highly uncharacteristic for Cooperstown in late April.

"This is a well-deserved additional recognition that (Aaron) richly deserves," said Bartholomay. "The exhibit itself is outstanding, and I think they covered his career pretty well."

As for why Aaron is so deserving of this honor, Bartholomay didn't hesitate in saying Aaron is the greatest to have played the game.

"As a player, he's a clear No. 1 for me," Bartholomay said. "Not even a 1A. Take that dimension and add to it what he's done since his career, and he's way off by himself."

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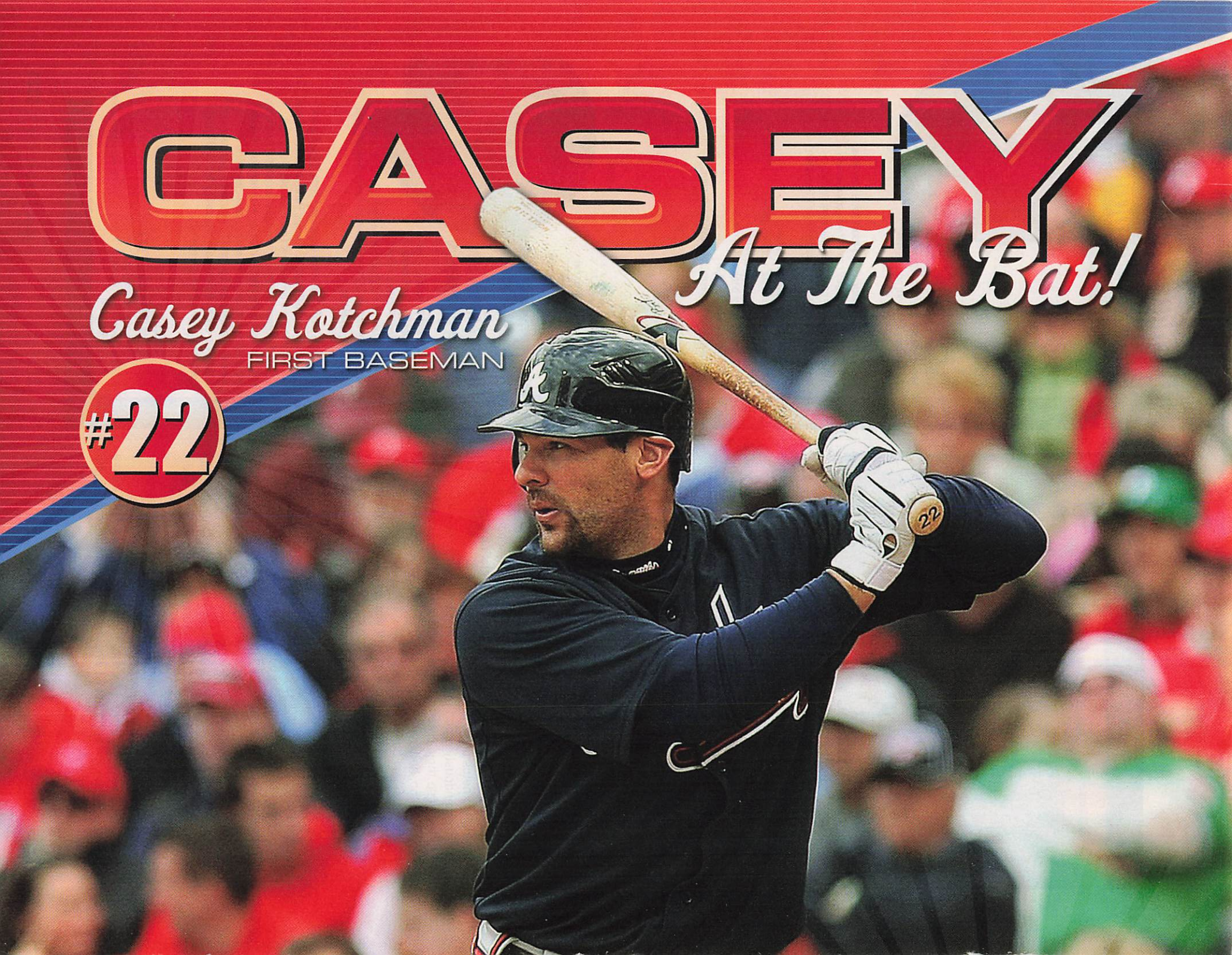
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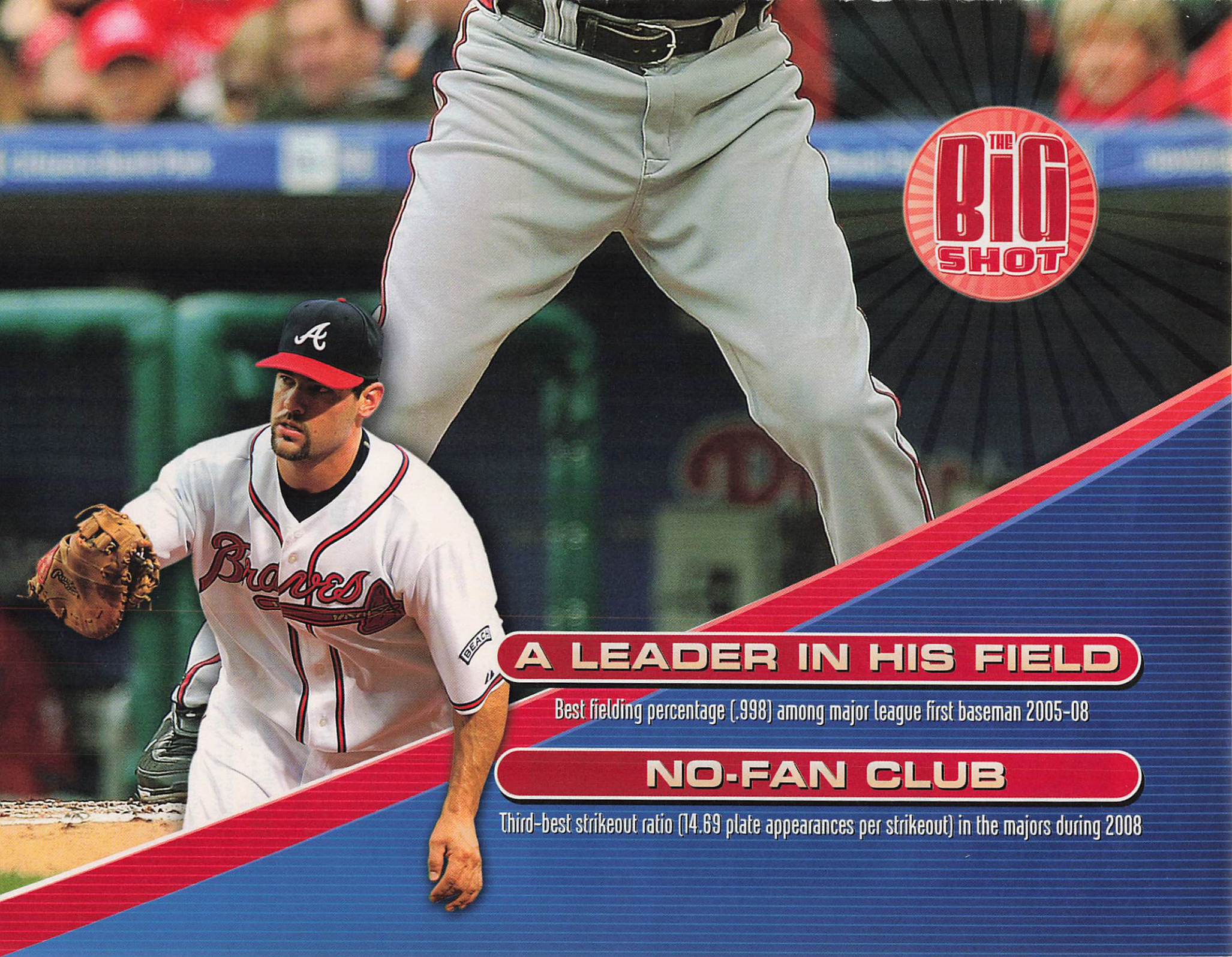

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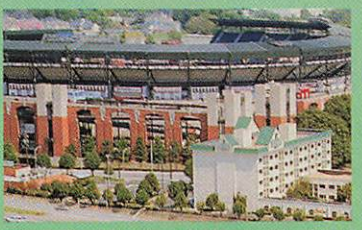

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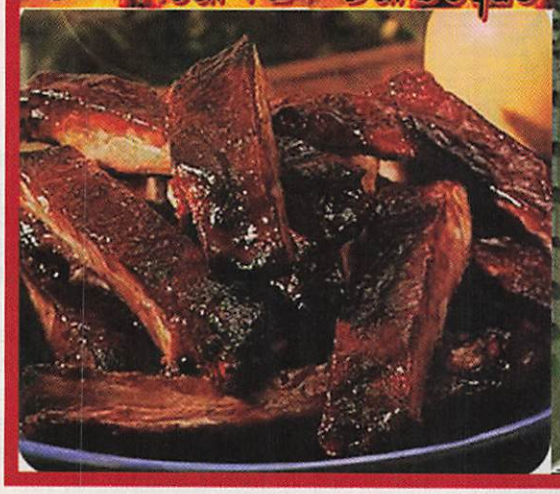

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SOLVING THE UP-THE-MIDDLE PUZZLE

BY STEVE FALL

WHILE EVERY FRONT OFFICE tries to build a strong team up the middle, finding talent there isn't easy. Shortstop, second base, center field and catcher are baseball's four most challenging defensive positions. If a team gets both good fielding and strong hitting from these spots, it's well on its way to building a playoff club.

Defense is so critical at these positions, that teams may sacrifice a little offense for the sake of fielding. This makes hitting even more important at these four spots. For example, since the average starting catcher contributes less offense than the average first baseman, great hitting catchers impact their club's success more than great hitting first basemen.

Last year, Brian McCann hit 23 home runs and drove in 87 runs while batting .301. He had a .373 on-base percentage and .523 slugging percentage. The average NL catcher hit just .255 with a .328 on-base percentage and .387 slugging. Projecting their numbers over the same number of plate appearances as McCann (573), the NL catchers averaged 13 homers and 67 RBIs. So McCann provided extraordinary production relative to his position.

Kelly Johnson also topped the average NL second basemen by a comfortable margin in 2008. Although both McCann and Johnson started slow with the bat this year, the Braves still got solid production from the four key defensive positions. Combining their statistics with Yunel Escobar, Jordan Schafer and all the backups who played these spots, the Braves had 12 home runs (through May 2). That topped all but two NL clubs.

The Braves' up-the-middle players had not fared as well in runs batted in (42), placing ninth in the NL. But they excelled in both batting average (.268, fourth in the league) and on-base percentage (.367, second). Atlanta also owned the league's best slugging percentage at these positions (.449). Their offensive performance was especially impressive considering that McCann missed time with vision problems.

The team also received good production from these positions last season. The 2008 Braves had just the NL's 10th-most homers (56) from catcher, second base, shortstop and center field combined. However, this group excelled in most other areas. They ranked fifth in RBIs (308), third in batting average (.279), fifth in on-base percentage (.346) and sixth in slugging (.419). Since then, the primary starter only changed in center field where Schafer took over. Mark Kotsay, Gregor Blanco and Josh Anderson combined to fill that spot in 2008.

Bobby Cox's club not only has productive players at catcher, short, second and center, but young players, as well. Schafer (22), McCann (25), Escobar (26) and Johnson comprise the NL's youngest group at these positions. They average 25 years old, which edges the Nationals (25.25), Rockies (25.75) and Marlins (26.0). And among those three clubs, only Florida had strong hitters in the central part of its defense. The 16 NL teams averaged 28.75 years (based on each player's age on June 30). The Phillies and Mets tied for 14th at 31 years old.

Having productive young players up the middle should have a huge impact on the Braves' success moving forward. While nobody can predict the future, ballplayers younger than 27 tend to improve and those over 32 usually decline. Another key point: It's easier to acquire talent at first base, third base and the corner outfield spots than it is at any of the up-the-middle positions. So, while other clubs scramble to find contributors at the vital defensive spots, the Braves should be set for at least the next few years.

ATLANTA BRAVES

Three-time All-Star Brian McCann, who struggled with a vision problem early in the season, is a key part of the Braves' up-the-middle strength.

It appears that clearing the fence against Atlanta pitching won't be easy this year. Led by Derek Lowe and Jair Jurrjens – who rarely surrender home runs – the staff gave up just 11 homers in the first 24 games. That marked the fewest in the major leagues. To put that into context, the Phillies were victimized for 43 home runs in two fewer games. Besides Kenshin Kawakami, who gave up five homers, no other Brave had given up more than one home run through May 2.

Martin Prado makes the most of his opportunities. Among major leaguers with at least 250 plate appearances since the start of the 2008 season, Prado owned the eighth-highest batting average (.321). That put him behind only Albert Pujols (.357), Chipper Jones (.355), Joe Mauer (.334) Manny Ramirez (.334), Alberto Callaspo (.325), Dustin Pedroia (.324) and Kevin Youkilis (.324). Prado also posted a .383 on-base percentage and .470 slugging percentage in this time frame.

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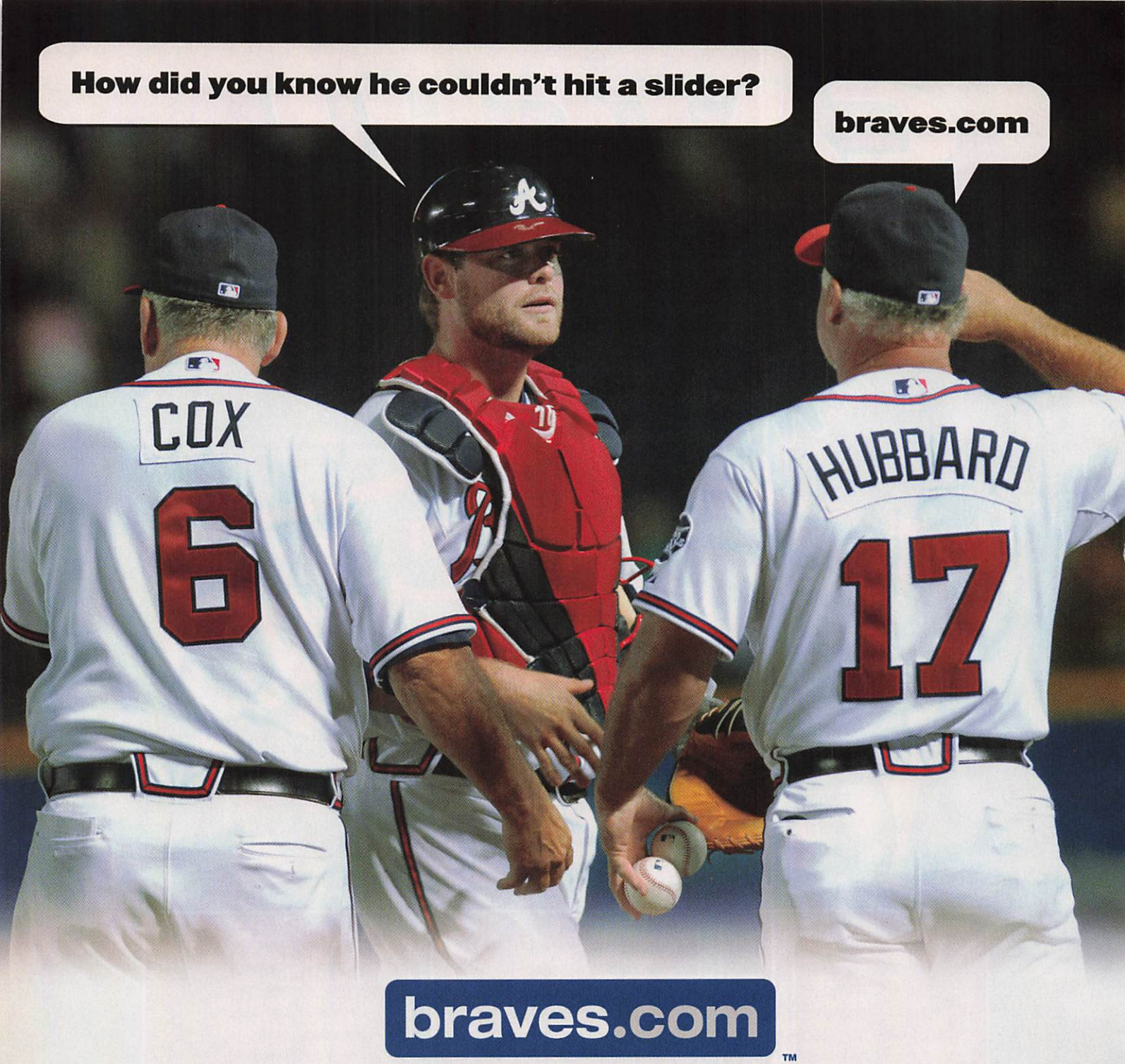
August 2005	Johnson & Langerhans
September 2005	Jeff Francoeur
October 2005	Andruw Jones
November 2005	Brian McCann
December 2005	Andruw Jones
January 2006	Edgar Renteria
February 2006	Niekro, Aaron, Lemaster
March 2006	LaRoche Family
April 2006	Andruw, Smoltz, Chipper
May 2006	Chris Reitsma
June 2006	Francoeur's Slam
July 2006	Edgar Renteria
August 2006	Brian McCann
September 2006	Bob Wickman
October 2006	John Smoltz
November 2006	Bobby Cox
December 2006	Jeff Francoeur
January 2007	Rafael Soriano
February 2007	Spring Training
March 2007	Mike Gonzalez
April 2007	Andruw Jones (Sold Out)
May 2007	Hubbard & Johnson (Sold Out)
June 2007	John Smoltz
July 2007	Diaz & Harris
August 2007	Edgar Renteria
September 2007	Mark Teixeira
October 2007	Jeff Francoeur
November 2007	Chipper Jones
December 2007	John Smoltz
January 2008	Tom Glavine
February 2008	Tim Hudson
March 2008	Mark Kotsay
April 2008	Teixeira & Jones
May 2008	Brian McCann
June 2008	Jair Jurrjens
July 2008	Chipper Jones
August 2008	McCann & Jones
September 2008	Skip Caray
October 2008	Brian McCann
November 2008	Chipper Jones
December 2008	Pete Van Wieren
January 2009	Frank Wren
February 2009	Hank Aaron
March 2009	Derek Lowe
April 2009	Vazquez, Lowe & Kawakami
May 2009	Bobby Cox & Chipper Jones



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TWENTY YEARS LATER, NORTON LIVES WITH THE PAIN OF FINDING HIS MOTHER AFTER HIS FATHER MURDERED HER

TRAGIC MEMORIES

BY MARK BOWMAN
OF MLB.COM

TWENTY YEARS LATER, the pain of finding a murdered mother at the foot of her bed exists primarily in the reality that the same love she provided her children will never be experienced by her grandchildren. One day they will learn that their grandmother's life was taken by a grandfather who is behind prison bars.

When Greg Norton awoke on the morning of May 6, 1989, life's next challenge seemed to be the college entrance exam that awaited him in a few hours. The SAT provided a chance for him to allow his mother to realize the dream of seeing him gain a college education and then take his baseball talents to the major leagues.

Tragically, the educational challenges and introduction to major league breaking balls proved much less traumatic than the experiences created by the events of that fateful morning.

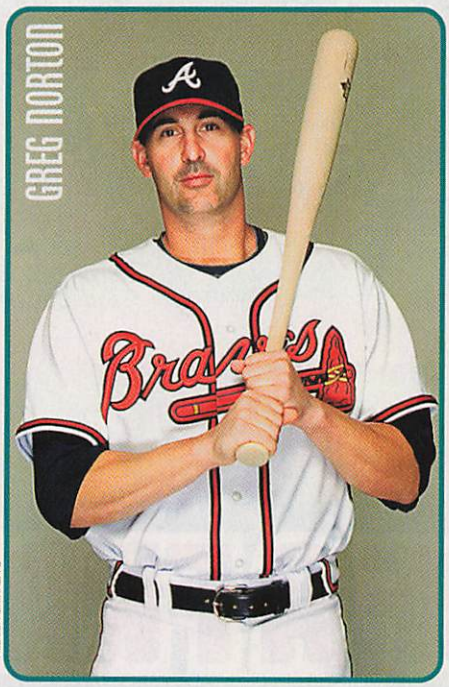
While waiting for a friend to pick him up, Norton walked upstairs to check on his mother. There he found Helen Norton bruised and motionless. Around her neck was a tie that her husband, Jerry Norton, used as a murder weapon.

"She was strangled to death with one of his ties," Norton said. "She was on the floor wrapped up at the base of the bed. I unwrapped her and checked her pulse."

Through the eyes of a 16-year-old kid rested his mother, who was dead long before he entered her bedroom. When investigators arrived, they found a botched attempt to stage a robbery and quickly deduced that this murder was an act of domestic violence.

Later that evening, Jerry Norton was arrested and charged with second-degree murder. While still grieving the loss of his mother, Greg bailed his father out of jail and then lived with him during parts of the next two years, simply hoping that the man who taught him baseball and many other life lessons was innocent.

Two summers later, Jerry Norton, a former minor league outfielder in the Pirates organization, was convicted of first-degree



ALLISON SHIRREFFS

murder. With heavy evidence pointing toward the fact that a just ruling was reached, Greg continued to chase - and realize - the major league dream while holding out some hope that his father didn't commit this crime.

"I wouldn't say I'm a religious man," Norton said, "but I prayed that if I was going to lose one parent, I would get the other one back. It was staged as a robbery with some drawers and some jewelry boxes opened up. The front door was kind of pried open, which I didn't think much of at the time. So, you're just kind of hoping that it wasn't your dad and that it was somebody else."

While sitting in his Hollywood, Fla., hotel room this May 6, Norton initially had a tough time concentrating on the fact that he and the Braves were in town to play a two-game series against the Marlins.

Whenever May 6 arrives, it's impossible for him to clear his mind of the event that sent his mother to the grave and his father to multiple California state prisons. Time has healed some of the initial wounds and created new ones that will be felt by his children, who are currently too young to understand why they only have one set of grandparents.

"As far as resentment, it's not something that I sit back and say, 'I hate my father,'" Norton said. "I can't say that I hate my father. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him. I think my parents did a good job of raising me to be a good person.

"The resentment has to do with my kids. I'm sure I have some scars in certain situations. But what's hard for me is that my kids can't experience their grandparents. They love my wife's parents. But it would be nice to have it on both sides."

Norton's 4-year-old son, Jace, has already started asking his father about the names of his parents, and 2-year-old Ciana will soon starting showing the same kind of interest.

At some point, Greg and his wife, Jaena, know that they'll have to explain what occurred. But for now, they'll simply raise their children with the same kind of love that Helen Norton provided to her sons and the countless children that attended the day schools that she opened and operated in the Oakland area.

By attending the University of Oklahoma for three years before embarking on his professional baseball career, Norton honored the memory of his slain mother. But to take it a step forward, he now wants to give back to other children who are in a similar position to the one he encountered.

"I think Greg can have a huge impact with the kids looking up to him as a role model," Jaena Norton said. "He has never used his past as a crutch or to gain pity. I don't know where he gets his inner strength. But it would be good for him to show other kids that they can overcome their loss."

Through his foundation, Phillies left-handed pitcher Jamie Moyer created Camp Erin, a bereavement camp for children who have lost a loved one. Jaena helped raise funds for this charity over the past three years and accompanied Tim Hudson's wife, Kim, to a camp that was held in Hampton, Ga., earlier this year.

Emotionally moved by what they wit-

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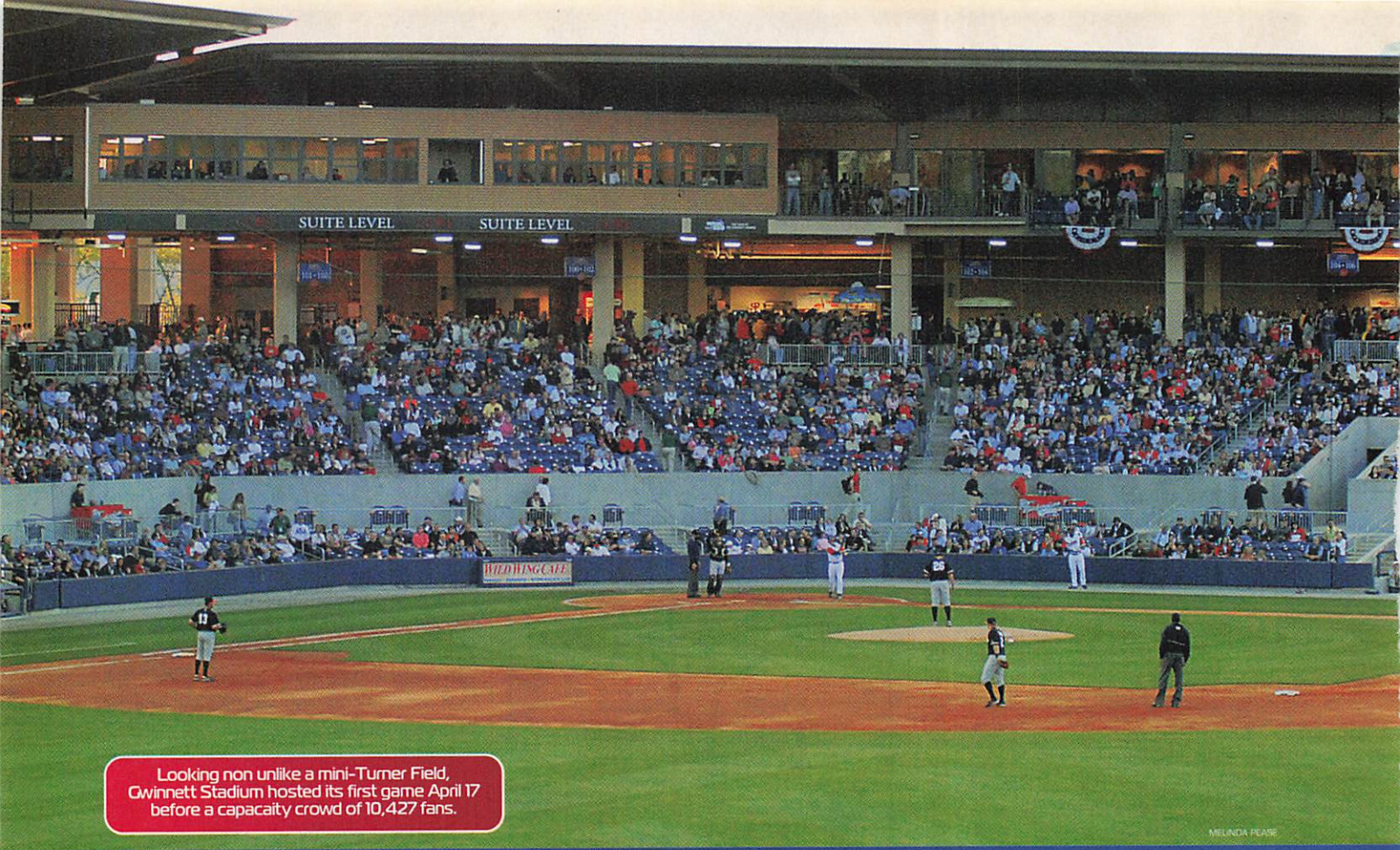


Looking non unlike a mini-Turner Field, Gwinnett Stadium hosted its first game April 17 before a capacaity crowd of 10,427 fans.

MELINDA PEASE

BIRTH OF A FRANCHISE

A Sparkling New Ballpark And Plenty Of Pomp, Ceremony & Pizzazz Welcome Triple-A Affiliate To Metro Atlanta

Braves GWINNETT

BY ANDY JOHNSTON

JULIE TUCKER STOOD ON HER PERCH at the top of Gwinnett Stadium's Section 100 and scanned the crowd. Her eyes glistened and a big smile never left her face as she glanced around the new ballpark, proudly admiring the packed house and sparkling amenities.

She had one of the best vantage points as the Gwinnett Braves opened their new home on April 17, a pleasant Friday night, even though she didn't have a seat. As one of the team's ushers, she's in charge of the section directly behind home plate.

Her grin didn't disappear when duty called and she had to trudge up and down the steps between innings, often acknowledging and waving at the season-ticket holders who filled her sold-out section.

"This is just incredible. Just incredible," Tucker said. "This is a great crowd, and this is an incredible stadium. This is going to be a lot of fun."

Opening night was highlighted with fireworks, a flyover, parachutists and player introductions as the Atlanta Braves and Minor League Baseball welcomed the former Richmond Braves to their new Gwinnett County home, about 37 miles northeast of Turner Field at 2500 Buford Drive in Lawrenceville.

A capacity crowd of 10,427 fans, many already proudly wearing red, white and blue Gwinnett Braves t-shirts and caps, arrived hours early, in plenty of time to watch team and county officials and former Braves gather for a pre-game ceremony on the infield of the $64 million stadium built in just nine months.

Recently retired Braves Hall of Fame announcer Pete Van Wieren emceed the event that included Braves president John Schuerholz and former Braves Phil Niekro (source for the name of the ballpark's restaurant), Javy Lopez, Brian Jordan, Brad Clontz, Greg McMichael and Nick Esasky.

"They invited me to do this several weeks ago, and since I was available, I was able to do it. No problem," said Van Wieren, who lives in nearby Alpharetta. "I actually live closer to this ballpark than I do Turner Field, so I may be out here a few times before the season is over."

It was a particularly wet winter in metro Atlanta, delaying construction at times and leading to questions about whether or not the stadium would be ready in time. But those concerns were put

to rest on Opening Night. Everything from the concession stands to the restrooms to the merchandise store was up and running. The stadium's broad concourse that runs nearly from foul pole to foul pole proved capable of handling the crowd that filled the seats and the outfield grass berm, where blankets and children jumping in inflatable bounce houses provided a picnic-like atmosphere.

"We had nine months and 10 days to open up," said Gwinnett general manager Bruce Baldwin, who moved with Atlanta's Triple-A International League affiliate from Richmond. "That was just a remarkable convergence of people, hard work, attitude, spirit and a will to get things done. It was a sight to behold. We opened to rave reviews. There are issues we need to tweak, but it's getting better every day. The stadium is spectacular."

Opening Night problems appeared to be miniscule. Baldwin didn't elaborate on what went wrong that might not have been noticeable, but Van Wieren's microphone didn't work and a new one had to be brought out for the opening ceremony. The flyover by Blackhawk helicopters passed by during the national anthem, not at the end, and Baldwin said he thought "the parachutists would fly right into the light poles."

"I think the issues we had were strictly internal," he added. "They're now minimal, where we can wrap our arms around them and bring them into a fixable area."

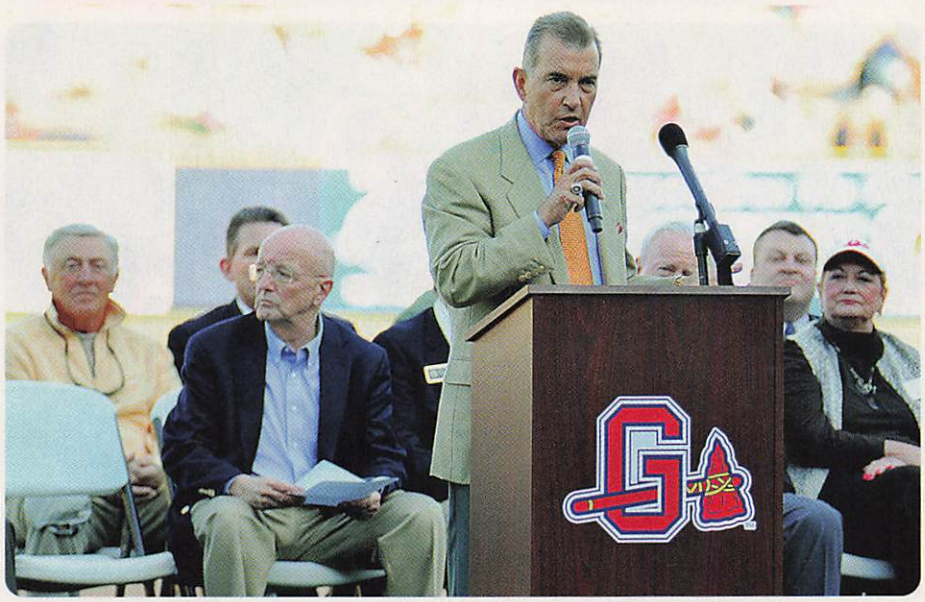
And the fans either didn't notice or didn't mind. The club had friendly hosts both outside and inside the main gate, welcoming folks and directing them to their seats. There were long lines at the concession stands and to check out at the well-stocked merchandise store. But again, nobody seemed to mind. They simply chatted with each other or turned to where they could see part of the action (Gwinnett lost to Norfolk, 7-4) from their place in line.

MELINDA PEASE

The festive atmosphere on Opening Night was aided by the picnic-like crowd and kids games on the grass berm (above) and the antics of the team's groundhog mascot, Chopper (L).

GWINNETT BRAVES

Atlanta Braves president John Schuerholz, with Phil Niekro and Pete Van Wieren behind him on his right, welcomes the team's top farm club to the neighborhood.



MELINDA PEASE

Between innings, on-field activities, characteristic of minor league games, provided entertainment. Kids danced with Chopper, the team's groundhog mascot. Two fans tried to conquer the dizzy-bat race, and two more - inside plastic, blowup eyeballs - raced each other. In the eighth inning, the familiar "Tomahawk Chop" reverberated from the speakers, urging the fans to work out their elbows in unison.

"It's great. It's a great minor league stadium," said Michael Albuquerque of Atlanta. "We were commenting about it on the way in here. I've been to a lot of minor league parks. I was comparing it to the Durham Bulls' stadium. It's got a nice flow to it. A nice feel. It looks real good, what I've seen of it so far."

Albuquerque and friend Matt Dunning of Alpharetta were admiring the field and the stadium from near the main entrance. Dunning, who went to the first interleague

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game at Turner Field in 1997, thought he would miss Opening Night until Albuquerque called with an extra ticket.

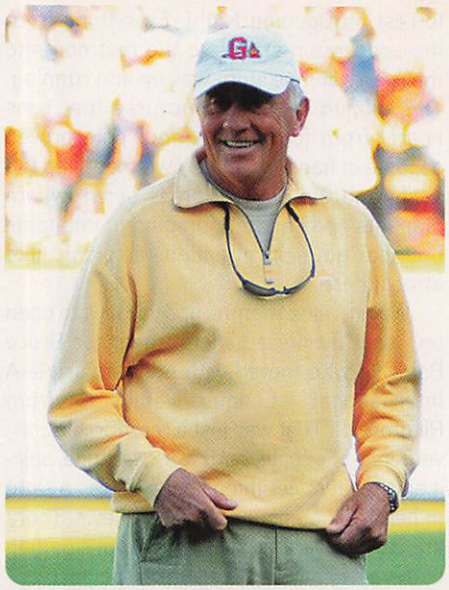
"It's major-league quality," Dunning said. "It looks a lot like Turner Field. They have a lot of entertainment for the kids out there. I think the outfield (berm) is great for the families and young kids. The sightlines look really good."

And the food was a huge hit. There is a distinctly Georgia feel with the availability of Chick-fil-A and Coca-Cola soft drinks. However, the concession stands and Niekro's Restaurant can fulfill a variety of tastes. Hot dogs are plentiful, but the menus offer many choices, including cheesesteaks, chicken tenders, grilled sausages, quesadillas, tacos and pizza. The Catcher's Mitt, near the main gate, even has fried Oreos, Twinkies and pickles.

The Knucksie – pulled pork, onions, slaw, pickles and barbeque sauce on a corn muffin for $9 – appeared to be the early favorite at Niekro's, an enclosed restaurant with tables and TVs so diners can keep an eye on the action.

The major league feel continues to the 23 suites, which extend down both baselines and have access to a central bar area and include porches that overlook the action. The clubhouse is large and modern and has all the luxuries of Turner Field, including spacious wooden lockers and flat screen TVs. There is an indoor batting cage with a viewing window for select season-ticket holders on their way from their own entrance into the stadium.

"Compared to Richmond, this is a lot different," said Gwinnett second baseman J.C. Holt. "Richmond was older. There was a lot of character there. I guess you could put it that way. I don't know if you can really compare the two. This place is awesome. It's first rate. It's a big league field."



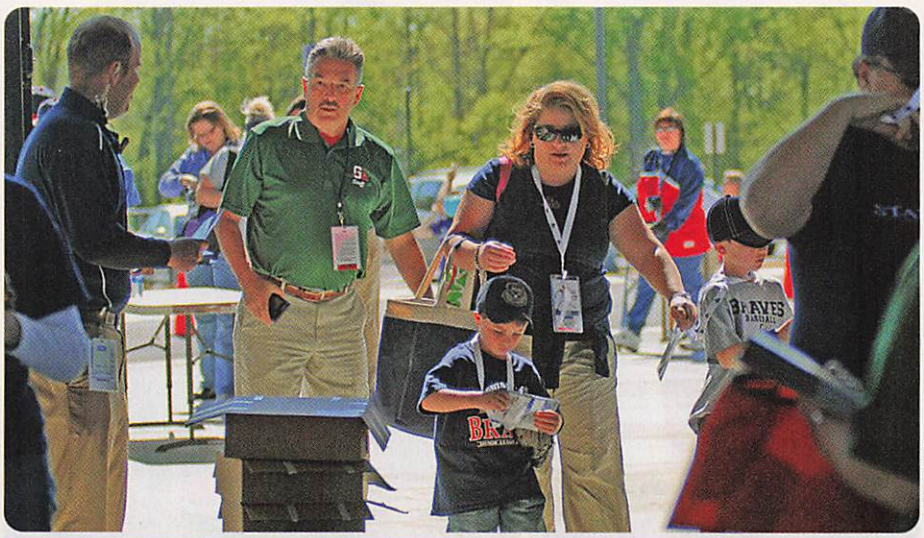
MELINDA PEASE

Hall of Famer Phil Niekro is all smiles, obviously pleased that the enclosed restaurant at Gwinnett Stadium is named after him and its pulled pork sandwich is called "The Knucksie."

Tucker and the other employees were allowed to check out the stadium before the first home game. She explored other sections, walked around the outfield berm, examined the clubhouse, and basically "toured everything."

"This is just going to be an incredible year," Tucker said. "There's not a bad place in the house."

Judging from Opening Night, everyone seemed to be in agreement about that.



MELINDA PEASE

Some of the very first fans arrive at Gwinnett Stadium on Opening Night.

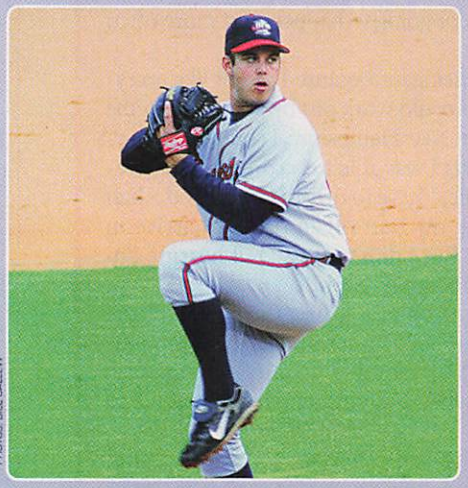
BY BILL BALLEW

PITCHING-RICH '08 DRAFT CLASS MAKING A BIG IMPACT AT ROME

ATLANTA SCOUTING director Roy Clark's goal in the 2008 draft centered on improving the organization's pitching depth. And if the early returns, including the first month of this season, are any indication, Braves fans can feel confident the mission was accomplished.

Nowhere is that fact more obvious than at Class-A Rome. Six pitchers from last year's draft class entered mid-May competing successfully in the South Atlantic League, and another - Richard Sullivan - has already been promoted to Advanced A Myrtle Beach. The Rome rotation includes supplemental first-round pick Brett DeVall, second-round selection Zeke Spruill and fifth-rounder Jacob Thompson. Paul Clemens (seventh round), J.J. Hoover (10th round) and David Francis (12th round) also made starts during the first month in between working out of the bullpen.

Fifth-round pick Jacob Thompson (top) and 10th-rounder J.J. Hoover are two of the bevy of pitchers selected in last year's draft who already are blossoming at Rome.



PHOTOS: BILL BALLEW

As this class nears its first anniversary of being drafted, Spruill has enjoyed the greatest amount of success among the pitchers. The righthander from Marietta, Ga., was 7-0 last year in the Gulf Coast League and continued to pitch well during Instructional League and spring training, then opened the season at Rome by going 5-0 with a 1.83 ERA through his first six starts.

"Zeke's been pitching outstanding," said Rome manager Randy Ingle. "He has a heavy sinker, and he throws strikes with every one of his pitches. When he takes the mound, you can almost be guaranteed of a quick game, because he throws so many strikes and gets lots of groundballs. He's real mature for his age, and nothing fazes him. It doesn't matter who he's going up against, he just pitches his game."

The 40th overall selection in the 2008 draft, DeVall had a 1-1 mark with a 2.08 ERA in his first two starts after opening the season in extended spring training. DeVall battled tenderness in his forearm last year in the GCL and during Instructional League, and the Braves wanted to make certain the lefthander was completely healthy prior to assigning him to a minor league affiliate.

"After seeing him for two starts, I can see why we drafted him so high," Ingle said. "In addition to being left-handed, he throws strikes and knows how to pitch. He goes right after the batter, which is impressive for such a young pitcher."

Thompson was considered a first-round pick entering his junior season at the University of Virginia before faltering for most of the year and falling to the fifth round. The Braves tweaked the lanky 6-foot-6 righthander's mechanics in order to improve his command and generate more arm speed. The initial adjustments have been encouraging, with Thompson allowing only three walks in his first 35 1/3 innings this year while posting a 1-2 mark with a 3.82 ERA through six starts. His best performance was an eight-inning outing on May 6 in which he allowed two earned runs and scattered five hits with no walks to earn his first professional victory.

"He's got the size, and he really looks like a pitcher," Ingle said. "He's another guy who throws the ball over the plate for strikes. He's got some polish, but he also has a lot of upside."

Clemens, Hoover and Francis bounced between starting and relieving during the first month of the season and continue to open eyes after being three of the 10 players drafted in the first 15 rounds by the Braves out of the junior college ranks last year. Clemens has a lean and athletic body with a whip-like delivery that produces a fastball in the mid-90s. Hoover throws four pitches for strikes and has a thick frame and the strength to emerge as a workhorse in the middle of a rotation. Francis made an immediate splash last season with a 16-strikeout performance in only six innings at Danville and challenges hitters while moving the ball around the strike zone.

"Those three guys are doing awesome, too," Ingle said. "With all these guys, you can put them in a jar and shake them up, and you'll be thrilled with the guy you pull out. They all have really good stuff, they all are competitive, and they all throw strikes. You can't ask for anything better than that at this level."

JEFF LOCKE

I'M PROUD OF WHAT I'VE ACHIEVED SO FAR

WHEN YOU'VE ONLY HAD six outings, you remember all of them pretty well. I threw five innings and didn't allow a run in my first start, and my attitude was to keep the momentum going.

The second start, I kept the team in the game, but the next time, I gave up six runs in three innings and wondered what was going on. Then when I went out and carried no-hitters into the seventh inning in back-to-back starts, it was unbelievable.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Drafted in the second round in 2006 (51st overall player) out of a New Hampshire high school, Jeff Locke is considered one of the Braves' top prospects. A 21-year-old lefthander at Advanced Class-A Myrtle Beach, he took no-hitters into the seventh inning in back-to-back starts against Salem on April 25 and May 1 and had allowed only 29 hits in his first 31 innings.

I was throwing all three pitches for strikes at any time in the count, and I had the hitters off-balance by throwing the ball inside and outside and up and down. Those kinds of outings really give you a lot of confidence and create confidence in your teammates.

Last season at Rome was tough at times, but I managed to have a decent year despite my (5-12) record. I think a lot of it has to do with the way I was raised. I never played on a good team growing up. I played with some good players in Little League and high school, but we still lost a lot of games.

My dad always told me that you're going to win some and you're going to lose some. My first two years of pro ball, I threw pretty well and had some good numbers. At Rome, my dad kept reminding me that I put together a lot of good outings and that I needed to stay tough and keep my head up.

> "WHEN I WENT OUT AND CARRIED NO-HITTERS INTO THE SEVENTH INNING IN BACK-TO-BACK STARTS, IT WAS UNBELIEVABLE."

I knew my teammates were doing the best job they could, and my goal was that every time I left the mound, I had given the team my best effort and put them in position to win the game. Some days that's not going to happen. But more often than not, it will if I do what I need to do.

I feel fortunate to come from a cold-weather state, because I'm not like everyone else. It seems like most guys growing up could work out by going out in the backyard any time they felt like it, but living in New Hampshire, I couldn't do that.

I take a lot of pride in the fact that nothing I was able to accomplish in baseball came easy. In the off-season, for example, I have to drive an hour and a half to throw a bullpen session. I have to work my butt off in order to arrive in Orlando in great shape for spring training. But I don't get tired of hearing I'm from a cold-weather state, because I love where I'm from.

The most famous player from New Hampshire is Chris Carpenter of the Cardinals. He hosts the New Hampshire Baseball Dinner, and he has a foundation called CHAD - Children's Hospital at Dartmouth. I used to go to the dinner every year when I was a kid, and then when I got drafted, he invited me to be one of the guests of honor.

The past three years, I sat with him at the same table, and he shares things with me that are unreal. He really showed me how much you can't take things for granted in this game, especially with him going from a Cy Young Award winner (2005) to pitching maybe 20 innings since then due to injuries. He's stressed to me how fast you can go from being on top of the world one minute to being at the bottom the next. He's a great guy who has gone out of his way to help me.

We've had a pretty rocky start in Myrtle Beach so far, but no one is down or worried about it. No one is hanging his head or thinking we're a terrible team in last place. We all know how much talent there is on this squad. Once we turn that corner and get healthy, we have a chance to be an outstanding team.

GWINNETT
TRIPLE A

TOMMY HANSON'S 1-3 record was in no way indicative of how effective he was during his first full month against Triple-A hitters. Hanson led the minors with 57 strikeouts through May 10 and had allowed only 27 hits in his first 40 2/3 innings. Despite his performance, including a 1.99 ERA, the Braves say they want Hanson to continue to build a solid foundation by pitching against experienced hitters in the International League...

Kris Medlen, who was nearly as effective as Hanson during big league camp, did not allow more than two earned runs in his first six outings this season. The righthander opened May with back-to-back shutout appearances, limiting Pawtucket to three hits with eight strikeouts in six innings on May 1 before giving up only two hits with a season-high 10 strikeouts over seven innings versus Syracuse on May 6. Medlen, a former shortstop, also batted for the first time this season against the Chiefs and stroked a pair of singles in three at-bats...

Shortstop **Diory Hernandez** is hitting with more consistency than at any point in his career. The middle infielder and the G-Braves' leading batter concluded a seven-game hitting streak by going 11-for-18 with four doubles and seven RBIs over a four-game stretch, from April 28-May 2...

First baseman **Barbaro Canizares** had a nine-game hitting streak from April 13-21 and a 13-game hitting streak from April 25-May 8. He is also hitting for more power. Canizares' career-high for home runs is 13 last year, but he had a team-best five through May 10...

With outfielders **Gregor Blanco**, **Joe Borchard** and **Reid Gorecki** struggling at the plate, manager **Dave Brundage** started second baseman **J.C. Holt** in left field for three games in early May. A centerfielder late in his career at LSU, Holt has overcome his traditional slow starts by hitting .302 in April and maintaining a .300 batting average through May 10. Holt's speed and versatility could enable him to fill a role should a need arise in Atlanta...

Third baseman **Van Pope** got off to a rocky start at the plate by hitting only .158 through his first 10 games. The defensive standout started to show signs of breaking from his slump over his next 14 games by going 12-for-45 (.267) to raise his batting average to .217. He also displayed some of

the power the Braves have been longing to see by producing five doubles, two home runs and nine RBIs during that 14-game stretch...

The G-Braves received **Brian Barton** after Atlanta acquired the outfielder from St. Louis in exchange for pitcher **Blaine Boyer** on April 20. A former University of Miami standout, the 27-year-old Barton spent all of the 2008 season in the major leagues after being taken in the Rule 5 draft from Cleveland. He batted .268 in 82 games for the Cardinals, including .289 as a pinch-hitter.

MISSISSIPPI
DOUBLE A

GORKYS HERNANDEZ has been impressive in the Southern League with his defensive play in center field and consistency at the top of the batting order. The Midwest League Most Valuable Player in 2007 prior to being acquired from Detroit with Jair Jurrjens for Edgar Renteria, Hernandez was bothered by a lingering hamstring injury for most of last season. Now that he's healthy, Hernandez is displaying his excellent speed to make plays in the outfield as well as on the basepaths. He has been working with hitting coach **Roosevelt Brown** and roving hitting instructor **Leon Roberts** on shortening his swing...

Deunte Heath has been overpowering at times while getting off to another strong start in the Southern League. The hard-throwing righthander allowed only four earned runs over his first five starts. Control issues (16 walks in his first 33 1/3 innings) continue to be the greatest challenge for Heath, although 10 of the walks came during two starts...

The early stages of the season are rarely kind to first baseman **Kala Ka'aihue**, and that has been the case again in 2009. After hitting a home run on Opening Day, Ka'aihue proceeded to hit only .194 in April and owned a mediocre .205 average through May 10. A lack of contact has been the greatest detriment to Ka'aihue's production (20 strikeouts in his first 78 at-bats)...

Jonny Venters is having the type of success the Braves believed possible for the past several years. Venters is coming off a strong showing in Hawaii Winter Baseball and opened this season allowing only six earned runs in 28 1/3 innings...

Stephen Marek, who was acquired from the Angels with Casey Kotchman last July for Mark Teixeira, was 0-for-4 in save opportunities. Marek had eight walks versus seven strikeouts in 10 1/3 innings, and opponents were hitting .326 against him.

MYRTLE BEACH
ADVANCED A

THE PELICANS failed to win any of their first eight series of the season, a fact that can be attributed to the team's youth, as well as several injuries. Outfielder **Jason Heyward** missed a week with a hip flexor, and first baseman **Freddie Freeman** was in and out of the lineup while battling an ailing oblique. Reliever **Cory Gearrin** went to Orlando in early May to have the recurring stiffness in his throwing shoulder evaluated. Gearrin's stiff shoulder is not expected to be a long-term concern. Prior to being evaluated, the side-arming reliever had a 0.82 ERA in his first nine games with 13

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

strikeouts in 11 innings...

On the positive side, **Erik Cordier** joined the Myrtle Beach rotation May 3 after opening the season on the disabled list. The Braves believe this season is the first time Cordier has been healthy since being acquired from Kansas City in 2007. He missed all of that season as well as the first part of 2008 while recovering from Tommy John surgery...

Cole Rohrbough returned to the mound May 10 after missing nearly a month with a hamstring injury... The lefthander, who allowed only one earned run and four hits over five innings in his first start of the season, was equally effective in his second outing, surrendering two hits and a run with five strikeouts in four innings versus Kinston...

Cody Johnson may be playing in a pitching-dominated league and a pitcher-friendly park at BB&T Coastal Field, but the leftfielder led the Carolina League with 11 home runs, including a pair at Kinston on May 10. Johnson is the top power hitter in the Atlanta organization, with 18 of his first 30 hits going for extra bases, and his batting average has improved (.288 through May 10). Strikeouts remain an albatross, with Johnson fanning nearly 40 percent (41 in 104 at-bats) of the time. When he put the ball in play, he batted.476...

Outfielder **Jon Mark Owings** joined the Pelicans May 1 after missing all of April while rehabbing a torn rotator cuff in his throwing shoulder. Owings, who endured eight hours of daily rehabilitation in Orlando, is being looked upon to provide a veteran presence on the young Myrtle Beach roster while he continues to build strength in the shoulder...

Richard Sullivan and **Benny Pruneda** were promoted to Myrtle Beach after strong starts at Rome. Sullivan, an 11th-round pick last year out of the Savannah College of Art and Design, was 4-1 with a 3.72 ERA in 29 innings in the South Atlantic League, and led the minors with 42 innings through May 10. Pruneda did not give up an earned run in eight appearances with only one walk and 13 strikeouts in eight innings. He was also successful on all six of his save opportunities with Rome...

Tim Gustafson also was promoted to Myrtle Beach on May 2 after joining Rome in mid-April. Gustafson, who pitched at Georgia Tech prior to being drafted by the Braves in the ninth round in 2006, pitched in three games in the Gulf Coast League last year while recovering from Tommy John surgery

ROME
CLASS A

ROME OPENED the month of May in a slump that eventually became a seven-game losing streak. The culprit was an inability to produce with runners in scoring position, including a four-game stretch in which Rome was 0-for-27 in such situations. By going 5-for-15 with runners on second or third on May 3, the R-Braves were able to post a 10-3 win over Bowling Green to snap the second-longest losing streak in Rome history. The team continued to play well by sweeping Lexington in four games to post a 15-15 record through May 10...

The early-season difficulties led to a handful of transactions during the first few days of May. Outfielder **L.V. Ware** and catcher **Craig Maddox** were sent to extended spring training, and pitcher **Brett DeVall** and outfielders **Jahdiel Santamaria** and **Calvin Culver** were promoted from the Orlando camp. Culver went 3-for-3 with a home run in his third game with Rome on May 5...

First baseman **Gerry Rodriguez**, who tied for the Appalachian League lead with 49 RBIs at rookie-level Danville in 2008, has had a similar start in the South Atlantic League. Rodriguez provided most of the team's power through May 10 with six of the R-Braves' 15 home runs and 18 of the club's 90 RBIs...

Third baseman **Samuel Sime** showed signs of making the adjustments at the plate after a difficult start at Rome last year led to a demotion to Danville. Sime was hitting .305 and displaying better patience, which has reduced his strikeout percentage. A solid fielder, as well, Sime has attracted favorable comparisons to Cincinnati's Edwin Encarnacion...

Rome received reliever **Craig Kimbrel** after the reliever posted a 10.97 ERA in his first eight games at Myrtle Beach. Command was his biggest problem in the Carolina League (15 walks with 18 strikeouts in 10 2/3 innings). Kimbrel, who had a 0.50 ERA in 24 games at three different levels last season after being drafted in the third round in June, was making a few minor adjustments in his mechanics that led to his difficulties with the Pelicans. He opened his stint at Rome by surrendering only one earned run and one walk with seven strikeouts in his first three outings. Casey Hodges was also sent down from Myrtle Beach after registering an 8.10 ERA...

Catcher **Braeden Schlehuber**, Atlanta's fourth-round pick and the club's highest non-pitcher selected in the 2008 draft, struggled out of the gates by hitting .174 through his first 22 appearances...

Outfielder **Jahdiel Santamaria** avoided what appeared to be a serious injury when he crashed into the wall at State Mutual Stadium against Bowling Green while chasing a foul ball in the second game of a doubleheader on May 4. The native of Panama went head-first into the wall, and play was stopped for nearly 15 minutes while emergency personnel placed him on a stretcher and took him to the hospital. The x-rays were negative, and other than a large contusion on his right shoulder, Santamaria suffered no major injuries to his neck, spine or shoulder.

TOP 10 CHOPTALK PROSPECTS

1	**TOMMY HANSON** RHP, AGE 22, GWINNETT
2	**JASON HEYWARD** OF, 19, MYRTLE BEACH
3	**KRIS MEDLEN** RHP, 23, GWINNETT
4	**FREDDIE FREEMAN** 1B, 19, MYRTLE BEACH
5	**JEFF LOCKE** LHP, 21, MYRTLE BEACH
6	**GORKYS HERNANDEZ** OF, 21, MISSISSIPPI
7	**COLE ROHRBOUGH** LHP, 22, MYRTLE BEACH
8	**ZEKE SPRUILL** RHP, 19, ROME
9	**RANDALL DELGADO** RHP, 19, ROME
10	**CODY JOHNSON** OF, 20, MYRTLE BEACH

FARM STATISTICS

GWINNETT 16-18

INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE TRIPLE A | GWINNETT STADIUM (678) 277-0300

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Barton, Brian (OF)	.230	16	61	6	14	2	0	0	4	5	21	3
Blanco, Gregor (OF)	.220	30	123	19	27	3	1	1	7	14	25	5
Borchard, Joe (OF)	.119	12	42	5	5	1	0	1	5	6	14	0
Boscan, J.C. (C)	.250	13	44	5	11	4	0	0	2	2	9	0
Canizares, Barbaro (1B)	.311	31	122	14	38	9	0	5	14	13	18	0
Colina, Alvin (C)	.235	14	51	5	12	4	0	1	10	4	11	1
Conrad, Brooks (2B)	.265	26	102	19	27	6	0	4	12	10	27	1
Gorecki, Reid (OF)	.200	26	85	7	17	5	0	1	8	6	19	5
Hernandez, Diory (SS)	.353	22	85	8	30	11	0	0	16	8	8	3
Holt, J.C. (2B/OF)	.315	20	73	10	23	4	1	0	9	10	11	1
Jones, Brandon (OF)	.306	20	72	3	22	5	0	0	10	10	12	2
Perez, Antonio (SS)	.120	9	25	3	3	0	0	0	1	3	7	1
Pope, Van (3B)	.221	25	86	12	19	7	0	2	11	10	20	1
Sammons, Clint (C)	.200	7	25	3	5	1	0	1	3	1	5	0
Timmons, Wes (INF)	.161	27	62	8	10	2	0	0	8	10	6	3

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Acosta, Manny	0-3	3.32	13	0	0	19.0	17	7	7	9	13	.236
Bueno, Francisley	1-1	5.00	11	0	1	18.0	16	11	10	11	11	.242
Gamble, Jerome	1-3	2.25	5	4	0	16.0	15	16	4	13	17	.246
Gomez, Mariano	2-1	1.59	11	0	2	22.2	11	4	4	11	9	.151
Hanson, Tommy	1-3	1.99	7	7	0	40.2	27	11	9	13	57	.186
Logan, Boone	0-0	4.05	11	0	0	13.1	15	6	6	8	16	.294
Medlen, Kris	5-0	0.96	7	6	0	37.1	19	4	4	10	44	.152
Morton, Charlie	3-2	3.44	6	6	0	34.0	30	13	13	9	35	.238
Nunez, Vladimir	0-1	3.45	9	1	0	15.2	16	7	6	12	8	.271
Parr, James	0-0	4.15	1	1	0	4.1	6	2	2	2	4	.333
Perez, Juan	0-0	1.59	9	0	0	11.1	9	2	2	4	13	.205
Redmond, Todd	2-2	3.86	6	6	0	30.1	33	17	13	8	21	.262
Reyes, Jo-Jo	0-1	6.00	1	1	0	6.0	7	5	4	1	2	.304
Valdez, Luis	0-0	2.16	13	0	6	16.2	17	9	4	7	18	.262

MISSISSIPPI 15-17

SOUTHERN LEAGUE AA | TRUSTMARK PARK (601) 664-7600

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Boscan, J.C. (C)	.455	6	22	4	10	3	0	0	2	3	2	0
Britton, Phillip (C)	.340	14	47	6	16	5	0	0	7	3	8	0
Cabrera, Willie (OF)	.214	21	70	4	15	3	0	0	4	5	13	1
Camarena, Jose (C)	.171	11	35	1	6	2	0	0	1	2	4	1
Campbell, Eric (3B)	.247	24	81	7	20	5	0	0	9	8	17	0
Creek, Greg (1B)	.244	15	45	5	11	1	1	2	7	1	10	0
Guzman, Javier (2B)	.087	12	23	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	4	0
Hernandez, Gorkys (OF)	.325	30	117	18	38	5	2	0	12	12	29	7
Hicks, Brandon (SS)	.227	27	97	10	22	4	1	1	11	9	33	5
Jones, Travis (2B)	.326	28	86	10	28	5	1	1	11	9	22	6
Ka'aihue, Kala (1B)	.200	26	80	7	16	3	1	4	12	15	21	0
Kirkland, Kody (INF)	.212	26	66	14	14	5	1	2	7	7	14	0
Rodriguez, Concepcion (OF)	.262	25	65	5	17	3	0	0	7	4	13	2
Young, Matt (OF)	.224	30	98	19	22	2	1	1	9	21	16	11

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Armas, Tony	0-0	.00	1	1	0	4.2	3	0	0	1	2	.176
Butts, Bret	t2-0	3.63	12	0	0	17.1	20	9	7	4	17	.303
Cofield, Kyle	1-1	3.56	6	5	0	30.1	19	16	12	24	23	.179
Cruz, Rafael	0-1	3.45	15	0	7	15.2	18	7	6	5	12	.286
Darrow, Rudy	1-0	9.31	9	0	0	9.2	11	11	10	10	9	.289
Diamond, Scott	1-3	4.65	6	6	0	31.0	41	18	16	15	27	.318
Dumesnil, Bryan	1-3	3.71	13	0	0	17.0	17	8	7	10	15	.262
Gamble, Jerome	0-0	0.00	3	0	1	7.0	3	0	0	4	7	.136
Glavine, Tom	0-0	4.50	1	1	0	2.0	3	1	1	1	0	.300
Gunderson, Kevin	1-0	1.38	11	0	1	13.0	7	2	2	4	14	.159
Heath, Deunte	1-1	2.97	6	6	0	33.1	33	15	11	16	29	.258
Lyman, Jeff	3-1	2.25	10	0	0	24.0	16	8	6	11	21	.188
Marek, Stephen	1-3	7.84	9	0	0	10.1	14	12	9	8	7	.326
Reynoso, Ryne	1-2	5.13	6	5	0	26.1	29	16	15	12	22	.282
Venters, Jonny	1-1	1.91	6	6	0	28.1	25	9	6	16	19	.231

MYRTLE BEACH 11-22

CAROLINA LEAGUE ADVANCED A | COASTAL FEDERAL FIELD (843) 918-6002

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Davis, Quentin (OF)	.227	17	66	8	15	2	2	0	3	4	11	1
Fisher, Michael (2B)	.243	26	103	14	25	4	0	0	9	7	22	2
Freeman, Frederick (1B)	.265	28	102	15	27	6	0	4	19	8	16	0
Gress, Randy (INF)	.135	13	37	3	5	2	0	0	2	2	10	0
Heyward, Jason (OF)	.261	23	88	15	23	6	0	4	11	10	18	2
Johnson, Benji (C/1B)	.234	15	47	5	11	2	0	2	5	5	19	0
Johnson, Cody (OF)	.288	30	104	17	30	7	0	11	23	15	41	3
Kennelly, Mathew (C)	.213	22	75	5	16	2	0	0	3	6	24	0
Lee, C.J. (OF)	.259	8	27	2	7	0	1	0	0	0	9	0
Linares, Donell (3B)	.238	28	105	11	25	6	0	3	15	3	7	1
Lundahl, Chad (SS)	.135	16	52	2	7	3	0	0	5	2	6	0
Marcial, Robert (INF)	.261	16	46	5	12	0	0	0	4	1	13	1
Miles, Cole (OF)	.247	23	77	11	19	1	0	0	4	6	20	3
Owings, Jon (OF)	.156	9	32	2	5	2	2	0	1	2	9	0
Shults, Stephen (1B/OF)	.250	5	16	0	4	1	0	0	4	2	6	0

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Barrett, Eric	0-1	2.00	5	0	0	9.0	5	2	2	3	11	.161
Broadway, Michael	0-3	7.02	9	0	0	16.2	20	14	13	12	13	.308
Chapman, Jaye	0-0	5.11	10	0	0	12.1	15	8	7	6	12	.306
Cordier, Erik	0-1	2.25	4	4	0	12.0	9	3	3	7	12	.225
Gearrin, Cory	0-0	.82	9	0	6	11.0	6	1	1	1	13	.154
Hodges, Casey	0-0	8.10	5	0	0	10.0	15	9	9	3	10	.341
Hoover, J.J.	0-0	9.00	1	1	0	3.0	3	3	3	5	2	.250
Kimbrel, Craig	0-0	10.97	8	0	1	10.2	10	15	13	18	15	.256
Locke, Jeffrey	1-2	3.77	6	6	0	31.0	29	14	13	15	29	.254
Mehlich, Michael	1-1	14.09	6	0	0	7.2	8	15	12	11	6	.267
Ortegano, Jose	2-4	5.96	8	4	0	25.2	28	19	17	12	21	.283
Osuna, Edgar	2-2	4.55	6	6	0	27.2	34	14	14	7	20	.298
Palica, Thomas	2-1	4.02	12	0	2	15.2	15	8	7	6	12	.259
Rivas, Carlos	1-3	7.71	6	5	0	23.1	30	25	20	13	14	.303
Rohrbough, Cole	1-0	2.00	2	2	0	9.0	6	2	2	3	11	.194
Sullivan, Richard	0-1	5.54	2	2	0	13.0	12	8	8	3	8	.245
Wilson, Tyler	0-1	5.27	12	0	0	13.2	9	10	8	12	13	.184

ROME 17-16

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE CLASS A | STATE MUTUAL STADIUM (706) 368-9388

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Barba, Ryan (SS)	.189	28	95	13	18	3	0	1	11	8	20	1
Campusano, Joel (2B)	.279	26	104	13	29	6	1	2	9	4	15	2
Culver, Calvin (OF)	.281	9	32	3	9	3	0	1	2	1	6	1
Fuller, Chais (INF)	.167	12	36	3	6	2	1	0	1	1	8	0
Lee, C.J. (OF)	.239	14	46	4	11	2	0	0	5	3	11	1
Maddox, Craig	.231	11	39	2	9	0	0	0	1	1	15	1
Rodriguez, Gerardo (1B)	.292	29	113	15	33	5	4	7	23	7	27	1
Santamaria, Jahdiel (OF)	.294	5	17	4	5	0	0	0	1	1	3	0
Schlehuber, Braeden (C)	.174	22	69	4	12	6	0	0	5	5	17	1
Shehan, Chris (OF)	.197	24	76	7	15	2	1	0	5	5	24	2
Shults, Stephen (3B)	.214	19	70	7	15	6	0	1	3	2	18	1
Sime, Samuel (INF)	.303	27	99	18	30	6	2	1	6	6	18	2
Sucre, Jesus (C)	.294	15	51	7	15	5	0	0	9	3	3	1
Sumoza, Luis (OF)	.267	30	120	14	32	3	2	1	9	7	25	5
Ware, L.V. (OF)	.130	17	46	5	6	0	1	1	5	2	14	3

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Beachy, Brandon	0-0	9.31	8	0	0	9.2	16	10	10	3	10	.381
Castro, Yeliar	0-2	5.17	8	0	0	15.2	15	11	9	8	20	.254
Chapman, Jaye	0-0	.00	2	0	2	2.0	1	0	0	1	3	.143
Clemens, Paul	0-3	7.89	6	4	1	21.2	33	21	19	13	23	.340
Delgado, Randall	1-3	4.03	5	5	0	22.1	20	12	10	11	27	.235
DeVall, Brett	1-1	2.08	2	2	0	8.2	6	2	2	2	7	.182
Francis, David	2-1	3.20	7	1	0	25.1	28	10	9	5	26	.292
Gustafson, Timothy	0-1	7.36	4	1	0	7.1	11	7	6	3	4	.333
Hoover, J.J.	1-1	3.09	6	2	0	23.1	21	10	8	2	29	.228
Kimbrel, Craig	0-0	4.50	4	0	2	4.0	4	2	2	2	8	.250
McMillan, Clayton	1-0	2.70	7	0	0	6.2	10	2	2	2	6	.333
Paulino, Angelo	0-0	5.27	8	0	0	13.2	14	8	8	4	18	.246
Pruneda, Benino	0-0	.00	8	0	6	8.0	2	0	0	1	13	.080
Spruill, Ezekiel	5-0	1.83	6	5	1	34.1	32	9	7	7	30	.246
Sullivan, Richard	4-1	3.72	5	5	0	29.0	37	18	12	5	27	.306
Thompson, Jacob	1-2	3.82	6	6	0	35.1	35	15	15	3	26	.263

2009 SCHEDULE

FSSOUTH — FSS

Peachtree TV — PTV

SPORTSOUTH — SPSO

ALL GAMES ON WGST-AM (640), 96.1-FM, AND BRAVES RADIO NETWORK AFFILIATES

MAY/JUNE

Braves — HOME — AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
24 1:30 PM FSS TOR	25 4:00 PM SPSO SF	26 10:00 PM SPSO SF	27 10:00 PM SPSO SF	28 9:30 PM SPSO ARI	29 9:30 PM SPSO ARI	30 4:00 PM FOX ARI
31 4:00 PM FSS ARI	1	2 7:00 PM PTV CHC	3 7:00 PM PTV CHC	4 7:00 PM SPSO CHC	5 7:30 PM PTV MIL	6 7:00 PM PTV MIL
7 1:30 PM FSS MIL	8 7:00 PM SPSO PIT	9 7:00 PM PTV PIT	10 7:00 PM PTV PIT	11 1:00 PM SPSO PIT	12 7:00 PM SPSO BAL	13 7:00 PM SPSO BAL
14 1:30 PM FSS BAL	15	16 7:00 PM SPSO CIN	17 7:00 PM SPSO CIN	18 12:30 PM SPSO CIN	19 7:00 PM PTV BOS	20 7:00 PM PTV BOS
21 1:30 PM FSS BOS	22	23 7:00 PM PTV NYY	24 7:00 PM PTV NYY	25 7:00 PM PTV NYY	26 7:30 PM PTV BOS	27 4:00 PM FOX BOS
28 1:30 PM FSS BOS	29	30 7:00 PM PTV PHI				

JULY

Braves — HOME — AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 7:00 PM PTV PHI	2 7:00 PM SPSO PHI	3 6:30 PM SPSO WAS	4 1:00 PM SPSO WAS
5 1:30 PM FSS WAS	6 8:00 PM CHC	7 8:00 PM SPSO CHC	8 2:00 PM SPSO CHC	9 8:30 PM SPSO COL	10 9:00 PM SPSO COL	11 8:00 PM SPSO COL
12 3:00 PM FSS COL	13	14 8:00 PM ST. LOUIS ALL-STAR GAME FOX	15	16 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	17 7:30 PM PTV NYM	18 4:00 PM FOX NYM
19 6:00 PM ESPN NYM	20 7:00 PM SPSO SF	21 7:00 PM PTV SF	22 7:00 PM PTV SF	23 1:00 PM SPSO SF	24 8:00 PM SPSO MIL	25 7:00 PM SPSO MIL
26 2:00 PM FSS MIL	27	28 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	29 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	30 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	31 7:30 PM PTV LA	

AUGUST

Braves — HOME — AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 4:00 PM FOX LA
2 1:30 PM FSS LA	3 10:00 PM SPSO SD	4 10:00 PM SPSO SD	5 3:30 PM SPSO SD	6 10:00 PM SPSO LA	7 10:00 PM SPSO LA	8 10:00 PM SPSO LA
9 4:00 PM FSS LA	10	11 7:00 PM PTV WAS	12 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	13	14 7:30 PM PTV PHI	15 4:00 PM FOX PHI
16 1:30 PM FSS PHI	17	18 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	19 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	20 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	21 7:30 PM PTV FLA	22 7:00 PM PTV FLA
23 1:30 PM FSS FLA	24	25 7:00 PM SPSO SD	26 7:00 PM SPSO SD	27 7:00 PM SPSO SD	28 7:00 PM SPSO PHI	29 7:00 PM SPSO PHI
30 1:30 PM FSS PHI	31 7:00 PM SPSO FLA					

2009 SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER

HOME AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	2 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	3 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	4 7:30 PM SPSO CIN	5 7:00 PM SPSO CIN
6 1:30 PM FSS CIN	7	8 8:00 PM SPSO HOU	9 8:00 PM SPSO HOU	10 8:00 PM SPSO HOU	11 8:00 PM SPSO STL	12 4:00 PM FOX STL
13 2:00 PM FSS STL	14	15 7:00 PM PTV NYM	16 7:00 PM PTV NYM	17 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	18 7:30 PM PTV PHI	19 7:00 PM PTV PHI
20 1:30 PM FSS PHI	21 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	22 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	23 7:00 PM NYM	24	25 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	26 1:00 PM SPSO WAS
27 1:30 PM FSS WAS	28 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	29 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	30 7:00 PM SPSO FLA			

Post-Season Dates Are Tentative, Unofficial and Subject To Change.

OCT./NOV.

National League Division Series | National League Championship Series | World Series

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	2 7:30 PM SPSO WAS	3 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	4 1:30 PM FSS WAS	
6	7	8 NLDS	9 NLDS	10 NLDS	11 NLDS	12 NLDS
13 NLDS	14	15 NLCS	16 NLCS	17 NLCS	18 NLCS	19 NLCS
20 NLCS	21 NLCS	22 NLCS	23 NLCS	24 NLCS	25	26
27	28 FOX WS	29 FOX WS	30	31 FOX WS	1 FOX WS	2 FOX WS*
3	4 FOX WS*	5 FOX WS*				

* If necessary

World Series home field advantage (Games 1, 2, 6 and 7) is awarded to the team representing the league that won the All-Star Game.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

nessed, both Kim and Jaena returned to tell their husbands about a 7-year-old boy who watched his mother die from a gun held by her boyfriend.

Some time this summer, Norton will help create a video that will allow these kids to understand that he overcame some of the same adversity that they are currently facing.

"It's something that I want to get involved with," Norton said. "I just want to help somebody or at least make them feel like there's light at the end of the tunnel. I have a story that shows that things can work out."

When Norton made his major league debut with the White Sox on Aug. 18, 1996, he didn't have the opportunity to share the moment with his parents, who once envisioned raising one son who would play in the National Football League and the other who would play at baseball's highest level.

Instead, he shared the realization of his dream with an older brother, whose own dream was derailed by his father's actions.

When Greg's older brother, Tim Norton, received word of his mother's death, he was participating in mini-camp as a backup quarterback with the New England Patriots. Within an instant, his NFL dreams were replaced with the reality that he needed to return to California to mourn with his fractured family and to provide his young brother the consistent father figure that he'd lost with his mother.

"I have all the respect in the world for what my

CONTINUED ON PAGE 53

FS SOUTH FSS

Peachtree TV PTV

SPORTSOUTH SPSO

ALL GAMES ON WGST-AM (640), 96.1-FM, AND BRAVES RADIO NETWORK AFFILIATES

TICKETING

TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR FOR TICKET INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

INDIVIDUAL GAME TICKETS

Single game tickets - with the exception of the June 23-25 series with the Yankees and the June 26-28 series with the Red Sox - are available at braves.com/tickets, the Braves box office at Turner Field, by calling 1-800-326-4000, and at all TicketMaster outlets.

Tickets for the Yankees and Red Sox games are now available as part of various multi-game packages at savings of up to 27 percent and can be purchased at braves.com/tickets or by calling (404) 577-9100. Individual tickets for those games will go on sale at a later date.

LOCATION	PRICE*	PREMIUM#	SEASON+
Skyline@	$1	$1	NA
Upper Pavilion	$6	$6	$3
Upper Reserved	$8	$12	NA
Upper Box	$12	$16	$10
Field/Terrace Pavilion	$22	$26	$12
Terrace Reserved	$24	$28	$22
Field Reserved	$26	$30	$24
Club Pavilion	$28	$32	$26
Terrace Level	$36	$40	$30
Field Level	$36	$40	$30
Club Level	$38	$42	$34
Dugout Level	$60	$64	$52
Henry Aaron Seats	$70	$74	$60

* Excluding June 23-25.
# All Friday and Saturday regular season games.
+ Season ticket price per game.
@ Available 3 hours before game at Turner Field box office.

GROUP TICKETS

Per ticket discounts are available to groups of 20 or more.
Call (404) 577-9100 for information.

FLEX PLANS

Priced as low as $99 (9 games/upper box location). Pick as few as 9 games and save up to $6 per ticket.
Exchange tickets up to 24 hours prior to start of any game in your plan.

Location	Regular/Premium	Flex Price	Yankees/Red Sox	Flex Price
Golden Moon Casino	$38/$42	$37	$48	$42
Terrace	$36/$40	$35	$46	$40
Field Level	$36/$40	$35	$46	$40
Field/Terrace Pavilion	$22/$26	$21	$32	$26
Upper Box	$12/$16	$11	$22	$16

4-GAME PACKS

GOLDEN MOON CASINO $158
FIELD LEVEL $150
CLUB PAVILION $118
TERRACE RESERVED $102
OUTFIELD $94
UPPER BOX $54

YANKS/BOSOX #1
June 25 vs. Yankees, June 26 vs. Red Sox, Aug. 1 vs. Dodgers, Sept. 19 vs. Phillies

YANKS/BOSOX #2
June 23 vs. Yankees, June 27 vs. Red Sox, July 17 vs. Mets, Aug. 15 vs. Phillies

YANKS/BOSOX #3
June 4 vs. Cubs, June 24 vs. Yankees, June 28 vs. Red Sox, July 18 vs. Mets

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TERRACE $140
OUTFIELD PAVILION $84
UPPER BOX $44

SUMMER SATURDAYS
June 6 vs. Brewers, July 18 vs. Mets, Aug. 1 vs. Dodgers, Aug. 15 vs. Phillies

NL EAST
July 17 vs. Mets, Aug. 21 vs. Marlins, Sept. 19 vs. Phillies, Oct. 3 vs. Nats

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TERRACE $145
OUTFIELD PAVILION $89
UPPER BOX $49

SUNDAY PACKAGE
June 28 vs. Red Sox, July 19 vs. Mets, Aug. 2 vs. Dodgers, Sept. 6 vs. Reds

THURSDAY PACKAGE
June 4 vs. Cubs, June 25 vs. Yankees, July 16 vs. Mets, Oct. 1 vs. Nats

EAST COAST FIREWORKS
June 26 vs. Red Sox, Aug. 14 vs. Phillies, Sept. 18 vs. Phillies, Oct. 2 vs. Nats

TUESDAY PACKAGE
June 23 vs. Yankees, June 30 vs. Phillies, July 21 vs. Giants, Sept. 15 vs. Mets

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TERRACE $145
OUTFIELD PAVILION $59
UPPER BOX $49

WEDNESDAY PACKAGE
June 3 vs. Cubs, June 24 vs. Yankees, Aug. 12 vs. Nats, Aug. 26 vs. Padres

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OUTFIELD PAVILION $170

ALL-YOU-CAN EAT PLAN B
June 23 vs. Yankees, June 26 vs. Red Sox, Aug. 1 vs. Dodgers, Sept. 19 vs.Phillies

ALL-YOU-CAN EAT PLAN C
June 24 vs. Yankees, June 28 vs. Red Sox, July 18 vs. Mets, Aug. 15 vs.Phillies

TICKET SPECIALS

* $1 Skyline Seats – Available three hours before every game at the Turner Field Box Office.
* Chevron Family Value Plan - 4 tickets, 4 hotdogs, 4 Cokes, a Braves yearbook, a parking pass and a $5 gas card for as low as $59 (37 percent savings), available Sunday through Thursday (Friday/Saturday games are an extra $20 per pack; seats are Upper Box; upgrade available for additional charge).
* Coca-Cola Two-For-One Tuesdays – Two Upper Reserved tickets for the price of one every Tuesday (excluding June 23-25).
* Two-For-One Wednesdays – Two Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets for the price of one every Wednesday (excluding June 23-25).
* ampm All You Can Eat Seats – For as low as $45, enjoy all the peanuts and crackerjacks, hotdogs, hamburgers, sodas, and more, for one low all-inclusive price.
* College, Military, and AAA Discount – Two Upper Box tickets for the price of one with a valid college or military ID or valid AAA member card (excluding June 23-28).
* Ultimate Kids Days – Tickets for all fans 14 and under are $5 on Sunday, June 7 and Sunday, Aug. 2. Young fans can also participate in pre-game parades around the field and be eligible to win several special experiences, including serving at the team's Honorary Team Captain or Guest Public Address Announcer.
* Publix Friday Night Fireworks (every Friday home game).
* All-Star Sundays (every Sunday home game): Kids run the bases, and Braves alumni autograph signings.

6-GAME PACKS

Terrace Level	$225 per seat
Outfield Pavilion	$141 per seat
Upper Box	$81 per seat

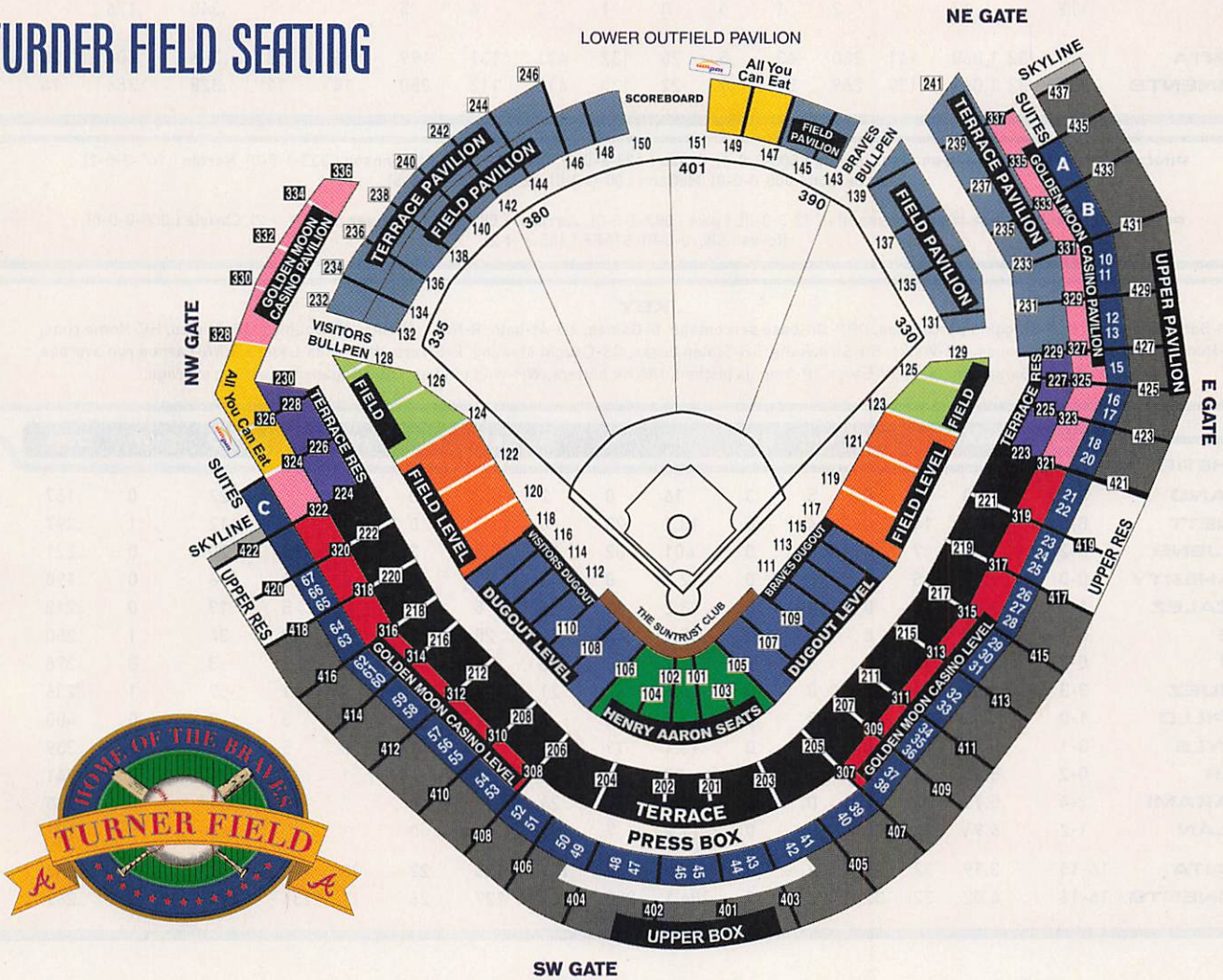
YANKEES PACKAGE

June 23	Yankees
June 24	Yankees
June 25	Yankees
July 23	San Francisco
Aug. 23	Florida
Sept. 20	Philadelphia

RED SOX PACKAGE

June 26	Red Sox
June 27	Red Sox
June 28	Red Sox
Aug. 16	Philadelphia
Aug. 27	San Diego
Sept. 17	Mets

TURNER FIELD SEATING



INDIVIDUAL STATS

THROUGH 5/11/09

BATTERS	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SO	SB	CS	OBP	SLG	E
INFANTE	.338	24	71	10	24	3	0	1	10	30	5	5	1	0	.372	.423	2
KOTCHMAN	.319	32	113	11	36	13	0	2	14	55	9	14	0	0	.379	.487	0
ESCOBAR	.302	29	116	17	35	6	0	3	17	50	9	13	1	1	.367	.431	2
ROSS	.298	15	47	8	14	4	0	3	9	27	9	18	0	0	.411	.574	0
PRADO	.297	20	37	2	11	5	0	1	6	19	5	3	0	1	.381	.514	1
JONES, C.	.284	25	88	15	25	4	1	3	11	40	19	15	0	0	.417	.455	4
RIGHT	.303		33		10	2	0	1	5	15	7	7			.425	.455	
LEFT	.273		55		15	2	1	2	6	25	12	8			.412	.455	
FRANCOEUR	.271	32	129	17	35	4	2	3	19	52	4	14	0	1	.287	.404	0
DIAZ	.258	20	66	8	17	3	1	2	13	28	8	17	1	0	.342	.424	1
McCANN	.246	17	57	10	14	4	0	3	11	27	9	7	1	0	.362	.474	2
JOHNSON	.242	27	95	14	23	4	1	3	10	38	10	14	1	1	.327	.400	2
SCHAFER	.217	32	106	12	23	7	0	2	3	36	23	43	1	1	.357	.340	0
ANDERSON	.191	16	47	6	9	4	0	0	4	13	4	4	0	0	.250	.277	2
NORTON	.143	29	21	2	3	1	0	0	2	4	6	6	0	0	.333	.190	0
RIGHT	.250		4		1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1			.250	.250	
LEFT	.118		17		2	1	0	0	1	3	6	5			.348	.176	
ATLANTA	.26	32	1,068	141	280	63	5	26	132	431	131	199	6	5	.346	.404	20
OPPONENTS	.252	32	1,067	139	269	59	9	22	135	412	112	250	14	11	.328	.386	14

PINCH-HITTERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) Infante (.500-2-0-1), Prado (.429-3-0-2), Diaz (.333-1-0-0), Johnson (.333-1-0-0), Norton (.143-3-0-2), Anderson (.000-0-0-0), McCann (.00-0-0-0). TEAM (.233-10-0-5).

PITCHERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) Kawakami (.273-3-0-0), Lowe (.083-1-0-0), Jurrjens (.083-10-0), Vazquez (.071-1-0-2), Carlyle (.000-0-0-0), Reyes (.000-0-0-0). STAFF (.105-6-0-2).

KEY

AVG-Batting average, SLG-Slugging percentage, OBP-On-base percentage, G-Games, AB-At-bats, R-Runs, H-Hits, 2B-Doubles, 3B-Triples, HR-Home runs, RBI-Runs batted in, TB-Total bases, BB-Walks, SO-Strikeouts, SB-Stolen bases, CS-Caught stealing, E-Errors, W-L-Wins-Losses, ERA-Earned run average, GS-Starts, GF-Games finished, SV-Saves, IP-Innings pitched, HB-Hit batters, WP-Wild pitches, OBA-Opponents' batting average.

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	GF	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HR	HB	BB	SO	WP	OBA
SORIANO	0-0	1.13	16	0	5	3	16	8	2	2	0	1	6	22	0	.157
BENNETT	0-0	1.98	14	0	4	0	13.2	23	4	3	0	2	5	12	1	.397
JURRJENS	3-2	2.01	7	7	0	0	401	32	10	9	3	0	16	20	0	.221
O'FLAHERTY	0-0	2.19	15	0	0	0	12.1	8	3	3	0	2	1	6	0	.190
GONZALEZ	1-0	3.29	16	0	12	5	13.2	11	6	5	1	0	5	19	0	.212
LOWE	5-1	3.80	8	8	0	0	47.1	44	20	20	2	2	19	34	1	.250
PARR	0-0	3.86	5	0	4	0	7	8	3	3	0	1	2	3	0	.276
VAZQUEZ	3-3	3.88	7	7	0	0	46.1	42	21	20	6	0	11	57	1	.236
CAMPILLO	1-0	5.40	4	0	3	0	3.1	6	3	2	0	0	3	3	0	.400
CARLYLE	0-1	5.40	10	0	3	0	13.1	19	10	8	1	0	5	8	2	.339
REYES	0-2	5.48	4	4	0	0	23	21	18	14	4	1	9	20	0	.241
KAWAKAMI	2-4	5.79	6	6	0	0	32.2	37	24	21	5	2	18	31	4	.285
MOYLAN	1-2	6.94	16	0	0	0	11.2	7	9	9	0	1	9	13	0	.171
ATLANTA	16-16	3.99	32	32	32	8	282	269	139	125	22	13	112	250	9	.252
OPPONENTS	16-16	4.02	32	32	32	9	284.1	280	141	127	26	11	131	199	8	.262

GAME BY GAME

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC	POS	GB
1	4/5	PHI	A	W	4-1	Lowe (1-0)	McCann (1), Francoeur (1), Schafer (1)	1-0	1	+.5
2	4/7	PHI	A	W	4-0	Jurrjens (1-0)	Johnson (1), Jones (1)	2-0	T-1	—
3	4/8	PHI	A	L	11-12	Boyer (0-1)	McCann (2), Schafer (2), Diaz (1)	2-1	3	-1
4	4/10	WAS	H	W	6-5 (10)	Campillo (1-0)	Escobar (1)	3-1	2	-1
5	4/11	WAS	H	W	5-3	Kawakami (1-0)	Johnson (2)	4-1	T-1	—
6	4/12	WAS	H	W	8-5	Jurrjens (2-0)	—	5-1	T-1	—
7	4/14	FLA	H	L	1-5	Vazquez (0-1)	Johnson (3)	5-2	2	-1
8	4/15	FLA	H	L	4-10	Moylan (0-1)	--	5-3	2	-2
9	4/16	FLA	H	L	2-6	Kawakami (1-1)	--	5-4	2	-3
10	4/17	PIT	A	L	0-3	Jurrjens (2-1)	--	5-5	T-2	-4
11	4/18	PIT	A	L	0-10	Reyes (0-1)	--	5-6	3	-5
12	4/19	PIT	A	W	11-1	Vazquez (1-1)	Prado (1), Ross (1)	6-6	T-2	-5
13	4/20	WAS	A	L	2-3	Lowe (1-1)	Diaz (2)	6-7	3	-5
14	4/21	WAS	A	L	3-4	Kawakami (1-2)	--	6-8	4	-5
15	4/22	WAS	A	W	1-0	Gonzalez (1-0)	--	7-8	2	-4
16	4/24	CIN	A	W	4-3	Vazquez (2-1)	Francoeur (2)	8-8	2	-3
17	4/25	CIN	A	W	10-2	Lowe (2-1)	Jones (2), Escobar (2)	9-8	2	-2
18	4/26	CIN	A	L	2-8	Kawakami (1-3)	Ross (2)	9-9	3	-2
19	4/27	STL	H	L	2-3	Jurrjens (2-2)	--	9-10	T-3	-2
20	4/28	STL	H	W	2-1	Moylan (1-1)	--	10-10	3	-2
21	4/29	STL	H	L	3-5	Vazquez (2-2)	--	10-11	3	-3
22	5/1	HOU	H	W	7-2	Lowe (3-1)	Francoeur (3)	11-11	3	-2.5
23	5/2	HOU	H	L	1-5	Carlyle (0-1)	--	11-12	3	-2.5
24	5/3	HOU	H	L	5-7	Moylan (1-2)	--	11-13	3	-2.5
25	5/4	NYM	H	L	4-6	Vazquez (2-3)	Jones (3)	11-14	4	-3.5
26	5/5	NYM	H	L	3-4	Kawakami (1-4)	--	11-15	4	-4
27	5/6	FLA	A	W	8-6	Lowe (4-1)	--	12-15	4	-3
28	5/7	FLA	A	W	4-2	Jurrjens (3-2)	Ross (3), Kotchman (1)	13-15	4	-2
29	5/8	PHI	A	L	6-10	Reyes (0-2)	Infante (1), Kotchman (2)	13-16	4	-3
30	5/9	PHI	A	W	6-2	Vazquez (3-3)	Escobar (3), McCann (3)	14-16	4	-2.5
31	5/10	PHI	A	W	4-2	Kawakami (2-4)	--	15-16	4	-2.5
32	5/11	NYM	A	W	8-3	Lowe (5-1)	--	16-16	4	-1.5
33	5/12	NYM	A	L	3-4 (10)	Bennett (0-1)	--	16-17	4	-2.5
34	5/13	NYM	A	W	8-7 (12)	Bennett (1-1)	Prado (2)	17-17	4	-1.5

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 49

brother did," Norton said. "When I broke into the majors at the age of 24, I thought about him being that same age when he sacrificed everything to help take care of me."

With the support of his brother, friends and educators at Oakland's Bishop O'Dowd High School, Norton utilized athletics to get him through this traumatic period.

"Sports allowed me to get away," Norton said. "When I sat around attempting to do my homework or sleep, my mind wandered. When I was playing, I could get my mind away from what had happened."

For more than 19 years, Greg held out a glimmer of hope that his father was indeed at the office as he attested that morning. But this benefit of the doubt was erased this past December, when his father chose to admit his guilt to Tim.

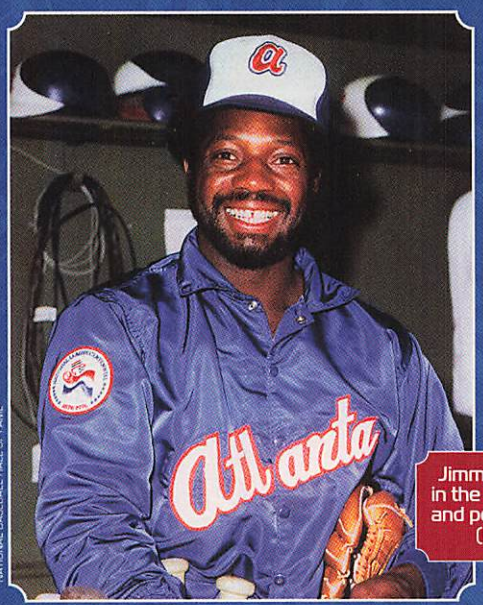
It's been four years since Norton visited his father, and he's not sure if he'll ever return.

With the signing bonus he received after being selected by the White Sox in the second round of the 1993 draft, Norton took care of his father's financial debt. But there wasn't anything to remedy his brother's shattered dream or the reality that they'd never again have the opportunity to tell their mother how much they appreciated all that she'd done.

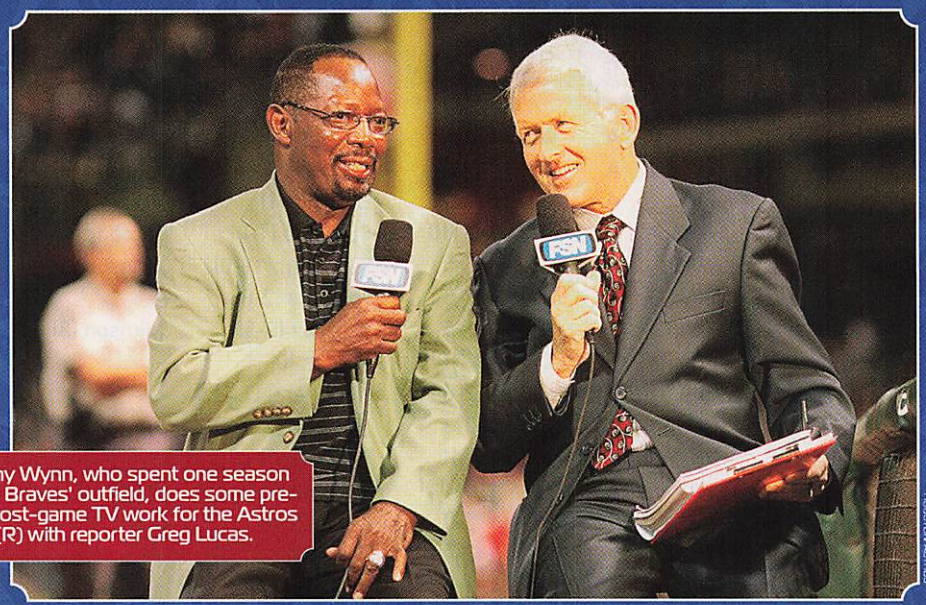
If Helen Norton were able to see her son now, she'd see the grown version of the son that she molded for 16 years. While saddened by the circumstances, he never allowed the event to lead him into a world of drugs and alcohol.

During those early days after the murder, Bishop O'Dowd athletics director Mike Bowler saw Norton find escape through the same game of baseball that continues to provide him relief 20 years after his mother's tragic death.

"The bad memories haven't tainted him," Bowler said. "We're very proud of what he has accomplished."



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



Jimmy Wynn, who spent one season in the Braves' outfield, does some pre- and post-game TV work for the Astros (R) with reporter Greg Lucas.

HOUSTON ASTROS

TOY CANNON

Jimmy Wynn Helping Astros Create Strong Bonds In Houston Community

BY BRIAN KNAPP

JIMMY WYNN always wanted to use the reputation he built as a player to serve as a platform for positive influence on others. The Houston Astros – they were known as the Colt 45s when he debuted with them as a 21-year-old in 1963 – provide him with the opportunity to do so.

As a community outreach executive for the Astros, the 67-year-old Wynn travels to schools to encourage kids to pursue their education and to steer clear of drugs. He also provides pre- and post-game analysis for Astros games on Fox Sports Net, and represents Minute Maid at baseball park dedications in the Houston area.

"I've been doing this for about three years," said Wynn, the Braves' regular leftfielder in 1976, his only season with Atlanta. "I had been doing public relations work off and on for the Astros, and when [franchise owner] Drayton McLane found out, he said, 'We need Jimmy Wynn working for the Astros full-time.'"

The job suits him perfectly, since it allows him to pass on his passion for baseball and serve the city where he spent most of his big-league career.

"I love everything about it," said Wynn, who was known as the "Toy Cannon" as a player because of the power and strong arm he generated from a 5-9, 170-pound frame. "I get to let the people of Houston know how happy I was with the way they treated me when I played for the Astros. It means a great deal to me to get to talk to all these kids and let them know their dreams are possible. I'm giving back to the community."

Wynn remains an active philanthropist, as well. For the past five years, he has organized a charity golf tournament to benefit the Houston Area Urban League. A branch of the National Urban League, the organization aims to "enable African-Americans and other minorities to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights."

The next Jimmy "The Toy Cannon" Wynn Celebrity Golf Tournament will be held on June 29.

"I used to play golf, but I've had a couple of back surgeries," Wynn said. "The urban league helps people secure scholarships around the country, around the world. I love the people here. We do a lot of good."

Upon his retirement following the 1977 season, Wynn went to work for a soft drink company in Los Angeles. He spent two seasons with the Dodgers and played in the 1974 World Series against Oakland when he homered off Hall of Fame closer Rollie Fingers in Game 1. That 1974 pennant-winning season was one of the finest of Wynn's 15-year career. He hit 32 home runs and had a career-high 108 RBIs, finishing fifth in the National League MVP voting.

However, the hustle and bustle of living and working in Southern California grew less and less appealing as time wore on, and he moved back to Houston to work part-time for the Astros.

"The city (L.A.) was too fast for me," Wynn said.

One of his generation's most underrated players, Wynn played for five teams during his career. Acquired by the Braves in a six-player deal that sent Dusty Baker and Ed Goodson to the Dodgers and also brought Lee Lacy, Tom Paciorek and Jerry Royster to the Braves, Wynn arrived with great expectations. However, in his only season in Atlanta, the outfielder hit a paltry .207 with 17 home runs. Wynn drove in 66 runs and led the

National League in walks with 127. The Yankees purchased his contract following the season, but his talent was severely eroded, and he was all but finished as a player at age 35.

"I enjoyed every minute of [my time in Atlanta]," Wynn said. "When I got traded [to the Braves], I learned that Phil Niekro wanted me to have a locker close to his. I got to know some great guys on that ballclub."

Wynn, a lifetime .250 hitter, finished his career with 1,665 hits, 291 home runs and 225 stolen bases. He finished in the NL Top 10 in on-base percentage six times, slugging percentage three times, runs scored five times, home runs four times (second in 1967 with 37 to Hank Aaron's 39), RBIs three times, and doubles and total bases once each. He also was in the Top 10 in steals three times, including a career-high 43 for third in 1965.

A three-time All-Star – he made back-to-back starts in the annual game beginning in 1974, the year he won the National League Comeback Player of the Year Award – he averaged 25 homers, 19 steals and 78 RBIs during one 10-year stretch (1965-74).

Wynn, originally signed as a free agent by Cincinnati in 1962, spent his first 11 seasons in the majors with the Astros, and many believe the fact that he played half of his games inside the cavernous Astrodome took a significant bite out of his offensive numbers.

"It was a big ballpark, built for speed, defense and pitching," said Wynn, the first Astro to hit three home runs in a game who also ranks in the franchise Top 10 in most significant hitting departments. "It didn't hurt me at all. I was proud to wear a major league uniform. If I had played in a ballpark like Minute Maid [Park], maybe I could have been at 500 home runs, but I have no regrets in me."

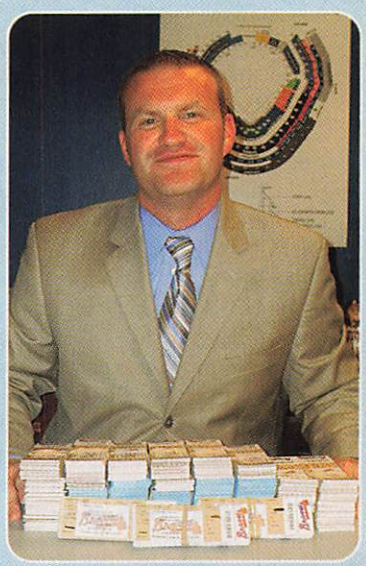
The Astros retired Wynn's uniform number 24 in 2005. He remains one of only nine players – the list includes Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan, 1986 National League Cy Young Award winner Mike Scott and recent cornerstones Craig Biggio and Jeff Bagwell – in franchise history that were bestowed the honor.

"It was almost like going into the Hall of Fame," Wynn said. "It showed that I did something that people loved when I played. I think they see me as a guy who tried each day to win ballgames, a person who was smiling all the time and saying wonderful things about the fans."

Married to his wife, Marie, for nine years, Wynn has two children – a grown daughter and son – and seven grandchildren. He resides in Houston and considers himself a jazz aficionado.

HOW I MADE IT TO THE MAJORS

TOM PATTERSON
SENIOR MANAGER
NEW ACCOUNTS/GROUP SALES



SPECIAL

BY STEVE FALL

DURING HIS FIVE seasons working in ticket sales for the Braves, Tom Patterson has come to appreciate the team's brand recognition throughout the South.

"Over the past 15 years, people really started buying into this product," said Patterson. "The Braves became part of their life. Going from last place to first place and then continuing that tradition with the 14 straight pennants, people got embedded in that brand."

In a previous job with the NHL Nashville Predators, Patterson faced a challenge selling tickets in a non-traditional hockey market where some prospects failed to recognize the team name.

"Much of the time when I would make a sales call, the person would say to me 'Nashville Creditors? I don't owe you any money,'" recalled Patterson.

The 34-year-old Patterson now has a staff of 13 full-time sales account executives, which he motivates to sell ticket packages.

"My responsibilities are to oversee our new business development, as far as multi-game ticket sales, and our group sales department," said Patterson. "We handle our suite rental business as well. I'm also heavily involved in the SunTrust Club."

Patterson grew up in Ripley, Tennessee, a small town in the western part of the state. St. Louis was the closest Major League Baseball city – about a four-hour drive – and his dad took him once each month to see the Cardinals play. When his town began receiving TBS during his teen years, Patterson got hooked as a Braves fan.

After earning a degree in marketing management from the University of Memphis, Patterson decided to pursue a career in sports.

"I wanted to do something to distinguish myself from all the people that want to get into this industry. So I went and got my masters degree at Middle Tennessee State University," he said. "I started working in their athletic department selling events. Selling to churches mainly to try and fill the football stadium. They had a hard time getting people to come out."

Patterson, who worked in retail management while pursuing his degrees, spent two years with the Predators until the NHL's lockout occurred. Then a recruiter for the Braves called and asked if he had interest in working for the club. He started with the Braves in December 2004.

"You've got to be passionate about working in sports," said Patterson, when asked about the keys to landing jobs like his in baseball. "And you've got to understand that it is a grind, especially from a sales standpoint. You have to value sports entertainment number one, that's the most important thing. If you're going to be able to sell, you have to believe in the product."

Patterson looks forward to going to Turner Field every day. He believes he's selling more than a chance to see the ballgame.

"We have this great facility, this great ballpark," he said. "People want to come out and be involved in that, as well. There are a lot of things from an entertainment standpoint to do, once you are here at the game, outside of just watching a Braves baseball game."

ALUMNI NOTES

The Milwaukee Braves Historical Association (MBHA) and the Milwaukee Brewers honored Brewers broadcaster and comedic celebrity **Bob Uecker** (C, 1962-63, '67) May 11-12 at separate events. Some 350 people, including MLB commissioner Bud Selig and former umpire Bruce Froemming, turned out May 11 at Potawatomi Bingo Casino to toast and roast Uecker at a banquet organized by the MBHA. The night included a pictorial tribute to Uecker, displayed by Rick Schabowski and narrated by Bob Buege, both ChopTalk contributors. Former Braves in attendance included **Johnny Logan** (SS, 1951-61), the president of the MBHA, **Andy Pafko** (OF, 1953-59) and **Felix Mantilla** (INF, 1956-61). Every person who purchased a ticket was given a baseball autographed by Uecker, who made 64 appearances on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, and had a long-running role in the sitcom Mr. Belvedere and a part in the movie Major League.

On May 12, the Brewers inducted Uecker into the Milwaukee Braves Wall of Honor at Miller Park. A Brewers broadcaster for 38 years, Uecker is a member of the National Radio Hall of Fame and winner of the 2003 Ford Frick Award.

Braves Hall of Fame member **David Justice** (OF/1B, 1989-96), who once appeared in an episode of the soap opera "All My Children," reportedly will make a return to "acting" in a movie adapted from the book "Moneyball" that's based on the statistical approach to building a team employed by Oakland GM Billy Beane. Brad Pitt reportedly will play Beane, and Justice is supposed to be one of the former players who will appear as themselves. Shooting reportedly begins in June.

The residents of Urbana, Ohio, planned a celebration May 26 in observance of the 50th anniversary of what is considered by some to be the "greatest game ever pitched" - Pirates lefty and Urbana native Harvey Haddix's 12 perfect innings against the Braves on that date in 1959. The kicker is that the Braves won the game in the 13th inning, 1-0, in a bizarre finish when **Joe Adcock** (1B, 1953-62) hit a home run that was ruled a double because he was called out for passing **Hank Aaron** (OF/1B, 1954-74) on the bases. **Lou Burdette** (RHP, 1951-63) worked the full 13 innings for Milwaukee and gave up 12 hits but was credited with the victory while Haddix was saddled with the defeat.

Oakland's **Joey Devine** (RHP, 2005-07) had elbow surgery April 22 and will miss the entire season.

Kansas City's **Tony Pena Jr.** (INF, 2006) had surgery May 5 for a broken hamate bone in his left hand.

When the White Sox visited the White House and their most-famous fan, President Barack Obama, April 20, **Octavio Dotel** (RHP, 2007) didn't settle for a handshake like the rest of the players. He asked for and received a hug from the president.

Kansas City designated **Brayan Pena** (C, 2005-08) for assignment. He cleared waivers and accepted assignment to Triple-A Omaha.

The career of Noble County (Ind.) native **Chick Stahl** (OF, 1897-1900), who helped the Boston Beaneaters (ancestors of the Braves), win two NL pennants (1897, '98), is honored with a display in the concourse of the new TinCaps (Padres' Class A) minor league park in downtown Fort Wayne that opened April 16.

Washington designated **Wil Ledezma** (LHP, 2007) for assignment.

Merle Harmon, the last play-by-play voice of the Milwaukee Braves, died April 15 at age 82.

Phil Niekro (RHP, 1964-83, '87) and **Javy Lopez** (C, 1992-2003) were among the sports personalities in the seventh annual United Way of White County Celebrity Golf Tournament at the Innsbruck Resort and County Club in Helen, Ga., April 14.

BIRTHDAYS

JUNE

1ST	ROY MAJTYKA (70)
	DEREK LOWE (36)
2ND	JACK PIERCE (61)
	MIKE DAVEY (57)
	MIKE STANTON (42)
	KURT ABBOTT (40)
	MIKE KELLY (39)
3RD	STEVE LYONS (49)
5TH	EDDIE JOOST (93)
	RUSS ORTIZ (35)
6TH	CARL WILLEY (78)
	MERV RETTENMUND (66)
	LARRY HOWARD (64)
	TONY GRAFFANINO (37)
8TH	PETE ORR (30)
9TH	ROY SMALLEY (83)
10TH	ELIAS SOSA (59)
	RICK CAMP (56)
	RANDY JOHNSON (53)
	JEFF BENNETT (29)
11TH	FRANK THOMAS (80)
	ODALIS PEREZ (32)
12TH	RYAN KLESKO (38)
	DAMON HOLLINS (35)
13TH	ERNIE WHITT (57)
	DARRELL MAY (37)
	CORY ALDRIDGE (30)
15TH	TY CLINE (70)
	AL CLOSTER (66)
	KEN HENDERSON (63)
	DUSTY BAKER (60)
	BRETT BUTLER (52)
16TH	ERNIE JOHNSON (85)
	KEN JOHNSON (76)
	WALLY JOYNER (47)
18TH	TAYLOR PHILLIPS (76)
	ANDRES GALARRAGA (48)
19TH	BOB ASPROMONTE (71)
	BRUCE CHEN (32)
20TH	PAUL BAKO (37)
21ST	MIKE BEARD (59)
	LUIS RIVERA (31)
22ND	WILLIE HARRIS (31)
	KENSHIN KAWAKAMI (34)
23RD	DAVE BRISTOL (76)
	JOHN RABB (49)
25TH	HUMBERTO ROBINSON (79)
	ALEJANDRO PEÑA (50)
	BRAD WOODALL (40)
	MICHAEL TUCKER (38)
26TH	GIL GARRIDO (68)
27TH	JOHNNY ESTRADA (33)
	DARYLE WARD (34)
	CHRIS WOODWARD (33)
28TH	DON BAYLOR (60)
	KEVIN MCGLINCHY (32)
	RON MAHAY (38)
29TH	BOB SHAW (76)
	JIMMY FREEMAN (58)
	EDDIE MILLER (52)
	PABLO MARTINEZ (40)
	TREY HODGES (31)
30TH	**GARRET ANDERSON (37)**

ChopTalk
THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

SUBSCRIPTIONS
P.O. Box 80750
Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750
PHONE 1-877-655-CHOP (2467)
WEB Braves.com/choptalk

PUBLISHER
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Wonderdog Publishing, Inc.

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PRODUCTION
ART DIRECTOR: Clark Odom

ADVERTISING
SALES:
Scott Rickles 800-929-4098
Dan Tomkiewicz 770-640-1681
FLORIDA SALES
Carmel Modica 850-231-3146

PRINTER
Publisher's Press

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES
McMillen Communications

NEWSSTAND OPERATIONS
Curtis Circulation Company

BUSINESS OPERATIONS
Rob Calcutta

CHANGE OF ADDRESS
Send address changes or corrections to: ChopTalk, P.O. Box 80750, Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750 or call 1-877-655-CHOP (2467) or visit braves.com/choptalk.

OFFICE OF PUBLICATION
12829 Trinity Dr.
Stafford, TX 77477-4214
PHONE 1-877-655-CHOP (2467)
E-MAIL Letters@ChopTalkonline.com

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GARY CARUSO

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

IS IT JUST ME, or do you feel it, too?

This team suddenly looks as good as it did in spring training. A 6-2 road trip against the top three contenders in the NL East will do that. A gusty, 12-inning, 8-7 win to finish the trip at New York and take the series against the Mets will do that, especially when it comes on the heels of a gut-wrenching, 4-3 loss in 10 innings the night before.

Five 1-run wins in the first month and a half, including two of the extra-inning variety will do that. Remember how difficult those were to come by last year?

Yes, it is still early. But there are many encouraging signs. Though the Braves are in fourth place at this writing - a bare 1 1/2 games out of first - they've accomplished this without the real Brian McCann for a good portion of the first 34 games. And Garret Anderson is just beginning to find his groove after a long bout with leg problems.

That, of course, is the great unknown. Health. It's the same for every team. The Braves found that out the hard way last season, and really have been crippled a great deal for three straight years.

Prediction: Reasonably good health this year is going to result in some exciting baseball this summer.

There's little doubt - any doubt? - that the Braves have the best starting pitching in the division. That's with Tommy Hansen waiting in the wings at Gwinnett (at least at this writing), and Tim Hudson working his arm back into shape, hopefully for a return sometime in the second half.

The bullpen looks better every day, and the presence of what amounts to an intimidating lefty-righty closer combination of Mike Gonzalez and Rafael Soriano just is not going to give up too many leads.

With McCann in glasses and Anderson on good wheels, the lineup - top to bottom - is a force. Yes, home runs don't come all that often, but Frank Wren said from the start that this team can score runs by utilizing its depth. And that is proving to be the case when it's healthy.

In the end, however, the factor that could well make the difference between playing in the post-season or sitting at home is the bench. It has been a very long time since Bobby Cox had so many excellent "reserves" to call on.

David Ross has proven he's a real "find" as McCann's backup. Omar Infante and Martin Prado can flat out hit, and are going to push for playing time all season. Matt Diaz, likewise, has a proven bat. And though Greg Norton started slowly, he's one of the best pinch-hitters in the league, as he's once again begun to demonstrate.

Among the regulars, rookie Jordan Schafer has struggled with the bat, but that's not unexpected for someone with no previous big league experience. What's really important is that he can track flyballs in center field with the best, as he's already shown (hope you saw that second-inning catch against the Mets' Ryan Church on May 13). That fielding edge is critical if the Braves are to maximize the benefits of their superior pitching.

Most importantly, this club is playing like it wants to win and like it knows how to win. Don't tell the rest of the NL East. Let them find out on their own - as they've already started to do. Change is in the air.

For a better understanding of what it takes to play major league baseball and why Bobby Cox is a master at getting the most out of his players, be sure to read his column on page 17 of this issue.

Congratulations to "The Roadrunner!" Braves Hall of Famer Ralph Garr, the 1974 NL batting champ and one of the most-exciting players in Atlanta history, is among the inaugural class of the Grambling Legends Sports Hall of Fame that will be honored July 18 at the Monroe (La.) Civic Center. Garr continues to serve the Braves as a scout.

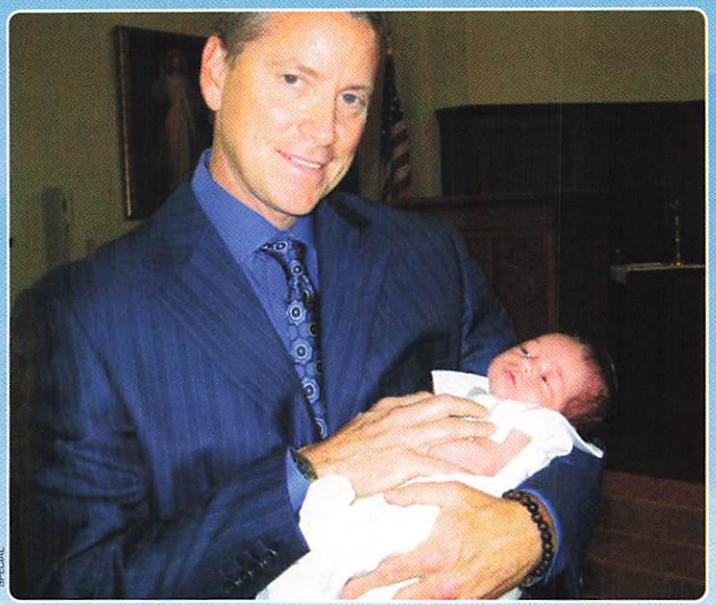
Attention dog lovers! As this issue was about to go to press, the Braves announced they have added a third Bark in the Park date June 10 because the promotion is so popular. There's also one on Sept. 6. Be sure to pre-register.

THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK was mailed May 21. The July issue will be mailed June 19.

BEYOND BASEBALL

BY **PATTY RASMUSSEN**

Tom Glavine holds his new son, Kienan Patrick, who was adopted April 22 by the 305-game winner and his wife, Chris.



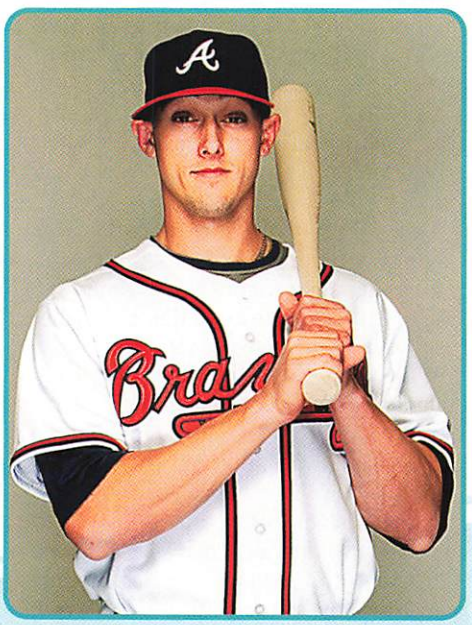
SPECIAL

TEAM GLAVINE

TOM AND CHRIS GLAVINE welcomed their fifth child, an adopted son, **Kienan Patrick**, on April 22. The adoption was privately arranged, and the Glavines were present at his delivery, holding him just 15 minutes after birth. Kienan weighed in at seven pounds, five ounces, and was immediately welcomed by his sister, **Amber**, and brothers, **Jonathan**, **Peyton** and **Mason**. Two and a half weeks later, May 9, Kienan was baptized with Amber and Jonathan serving as his godparents. Adding to the festivities, Mason made his first communion on the same day. Glavine, who threw a bullpen session in Philadelphia on May 8, flew back to Atlanta for the special occasion. His parents, **Fred** and **Millie** Glavine, also flew in from Massachusetts for the busy Mother's Day weekend and to see their newest grandchild.

JORDAN SCHAFER (below) will be featured as one of Atlanta's eligible bachelors in the June issue of Jezebel magazine. Asked which woman he considered "his type," Schafer named actresses **Megan Fox** (Transformers) and **Hayden Panettiere** (Heroes). And forget about dinner and a movie, Schafer said the ideal "dream date" would be a trip to Dubai.

Cole David Ross, the infant son of catcher **David Ross** and his wife, **Hyla**, was born at 3 a.m. on May 1, in Tallahassee, Florida. Ross flew to Florida after the April 29 game, hoping the baby would be born on the Braves' off day, April 30. He remained in Florida an extra day and was back in the lineup on May 2. Cole is the Ross's second child. They have a daughter, **Landri** (2)...



ALLYSON SHERREFFS

Jessica Carlyle, wife of **Buddy Carlyle**, reports their family is happily settling into their new home in Peachtree City, just south of Turner Field, after relocating from Nebraska. "Buddy sneaks out every morning to the little lake by our house to try and catch some bass," she said. Son **Carter** attends the same school as **Kennedie** and **Tess Hudson**, daughters of **Tim** and **Kim Hudson**, and often gets to have lunch with his dad before he heads to the ballpark. A baseball fanatic, Carter is playing on a team in the Sharpsburg AABC Youth Baseball League and is teammates with **Kolby Butts**, son of bullpen catcher **Allen Butts**...

Mike Gonzalez spent some rare in-season quality time during the last homestand of April when his family drove from their home in Deer Park, Texas, for a visit. Gonzalez's father, **Mike**, mother, **Norma**, and sisters, **Marissa** and **Melina**, planned to spend just three days in Atlanta but extended the visit to almost a full week. They spent the off day, April 30, shopping at the Mall of Georgia, and Gonzalez took his dad out to his favorite restaurant, Fago de Chao, a Brazilian steak house...

Troy Snitker, son of third base coach **Brian Snitker**, is playing baseball this summer in a collegiate league in Lima, Ohio. Troy will be in Ohio for two months before returning for his junior year at North Georgia

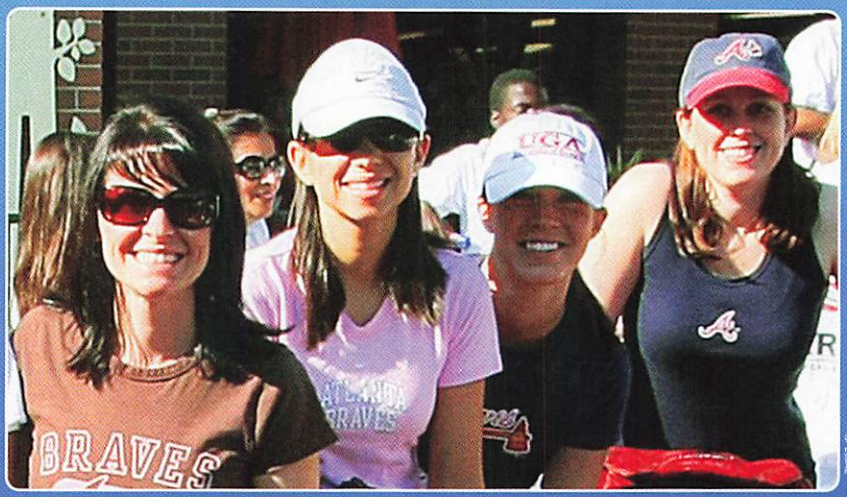
College and State University. Troy's older sister, **Erin**, was recently honored by the National Student Nurses Association at their national convention in Nashville for her efforts to spearhead local initiatives promoting the nursing profession in a positive way to middle school students. A student at the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing of Mercer University in Atlanta, Erin sits on the board of the Association of Nursing Students at her school. The outreach programs she developed for middle schools and local Girl Scout troops won the college both recognition and a monetary grant...

It's an annual rite of spring for **Kim Hudson**, making the trip to Los Angeles for the season finale of American Idol, May 19 and 20. She and **Ginsey Boyer**, wife of former Braves pitcher **Blaine Boyer**, now with the Cardinals, had the winning bid for the trip at the Make A Wish Foundation Wishes Gala last November. Kim and Ginsey were in L.A. from May 18-21...

Former Braves pitcher **Rudy Seanez** retired from playing professional baseball this spring but will open a Sandlot Baseball and Softball Academy later this year in El Centro, California, where he lives with his wife, **Dianna**, and their two daughters **Katrianna** (12) and **Lilianna** (10). Seanez, who earned a World Series ring as a member of the defending World Champion Philadelphia Phillies last season, played in the major leagues for 17 seasons and was a member of the Braves' bullpen from 1998 to 2000 and briefly in 2001. It's not the Seanez's first business venture. Dianna owns and operates a successful Cold Stone Creamery ice cream store. So much for retirement! At press time, Seanez signed a minor league contract with the Angels!

Make sure to cheer loudly for ChopTalk's favorite astronaut, Lt. Col. **Shane Kimbrough**, when he throws out the ceremonial first pitch prior to the Braves/Red Sox game on June 26 at Turner Field. Kimbrough will present the team with the Braves jersey he took into space last November during his mission on the Shuttle Endeavor (Dec. 2008 CT).

WALKING THE WALK



SPECIAL

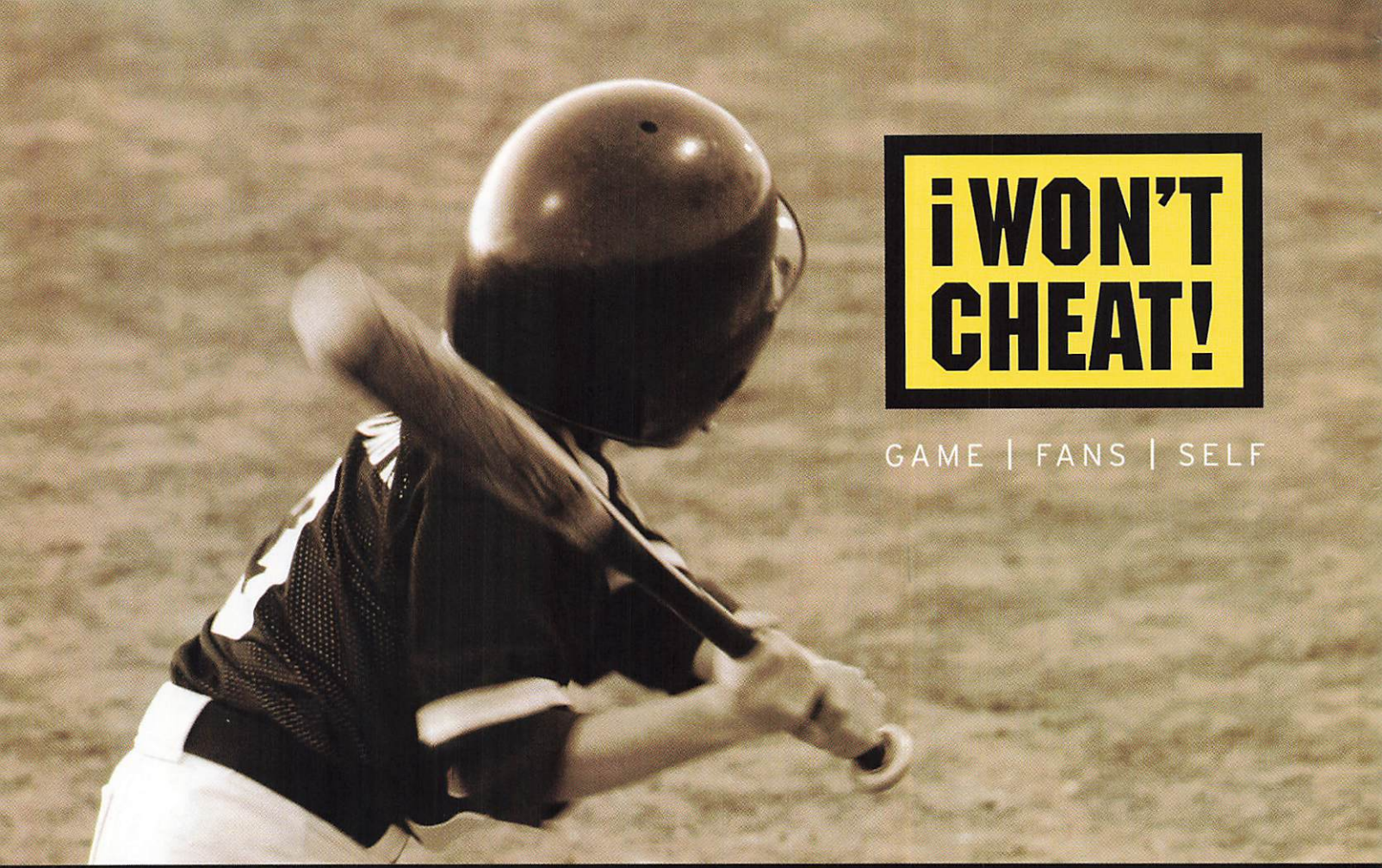
Displaying their loyalty, (L-R) Kim Hudson, Jaena Norton, Meredith Sammons and Leslee Diaz were among the Braves wives Walk for Wishes team that helped raise more than $26,000 for the Make a Wish Foundation.

KIM HUDSON (**Tim**) and Braves wives **Leslee Diaz** (**Matt**), **Jaena Norton** (**Greg**), **Meredith Sammons** (**Clint**), **Ronnie Snitker** (**Brian**), and her daughter **Erin Snitker**, along with other members of their Walk for Wishes team raised over $26,000 contributing to the event total of over $150,000 raised for the Make a Wish Foundation of Georgia and Alabama. Kim was the event chairperson for the 2009 Walk for Wishes, which took place April 25 at Atlantic Station. Later that afternoon, Kim and Jaena represented the other Braves wives when they visited Camp Erin, a bereavement camp for children founded by the Moyer Foundation. The Braves Wives raised funds last season to contribute to the start of Camp Erin in Georgia.

GOOD HAIR DAY

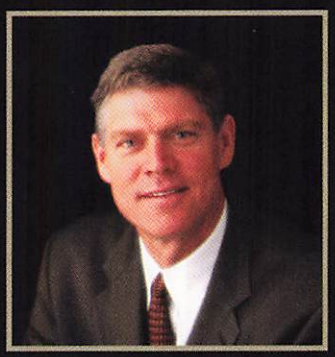
SPECIAL

WELL DONE, Amanda McDowell! The generous 10-year-old daughter of pitching coach **Roger McDowell** and his wife, **Gloria**, grew her hair past the middle of her back for over a year in order to donate it to Locks of Love, a non-profit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children in the U.S. and Canada who suffer from long-term medical hair loss. On April 22, Amanda made her donation, cutting off 10 inches of beautiful blonde hair!



i WON'T CHEAT!

GAME | FANS | SELF



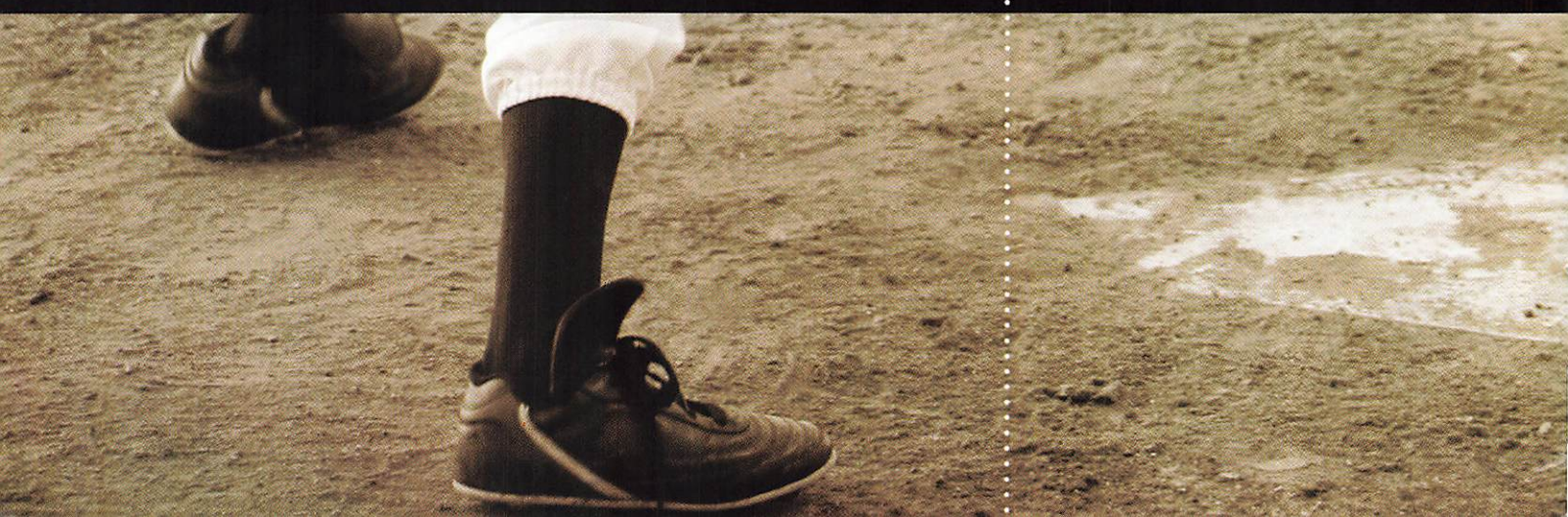
"Youth athletes who feel the pressure to cheat have been damaged the most by the steroid problem. Let's work together to create a drug free atmosphere in sports."

–Dale Murphy

2 TIME NL MVP, ATLANTA BRAVES

FOUNDER OF THE I WON'T CHEAT FOUNDATION

www.iwontcheat.com



TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.

CHOPPING DEBUT

Being Braves fans is just a wonderful part of life for my family. My father has loved the Braves since their Milwaukee days, and he attended the first Braves game ever played in Atlanta Stadium. He passed that love on to my sister and me when he and my mother took us to countless games throughout our childhood. There was no better way to spend a night than with my family inside the hallowed grounds of Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium and then Turner Field. My sister and I decorated our room with posters of David Justice, Ron Gant and Chipper Jones. In fact, my childhood "imaginary friend" was Dale Murphy!

On Opening Day 2009, we had the great joy of introducing my seven-month old son, Aiden, to our family's favorite pastime. He loved being a part of all the excitement and, of course, doing the Tomahawk Chop.

JACOB, JENNIFER & AIDEN SEVIER AND ALLAN, GAIL & WHITNEY WEBB

Auburn, Georgia

A "PRICELESS" LUNCH IN CINCINNATI

After a very long winter in Southeastern Minnesota, my husband and I decided we needed to take a road trip away from the never arriving Midwest spring. We checked out the Braves' schedule and thought it would be doable for us to see them play in three different stadiums within one week. So, we set out to visit Pittsburgh, where we watched them win... Washington, D.C., with a questionable rain delay and loss... And Cincinnati, where they won and we also experienced one of the highlights of our trip.

At lunch, we were very lucky to be seated at a table right next to two of our favorite Braves players - Jeff Francoeur and Brian McCann. Not wanting to disturb them, but finding it hard to contain myself, I had to initiate a brief conversation. We chatted briefly and left them to their meal. To our surprise, on their way out, Jeff was so great to come over to shake our hands and thank us. We know the handshake was why Jeff hit a home run that night! $7.50 for a beer, $42 for a ticket, lunch that afternoon - "Priceless."

DEB & LARRY MCCLELLAN

Minnesota City, Minn.

OUT OF THE PARK

You always produce a good "rag," but the April 2009 issue was outstanding! Every feature was well done and informative. The spring training feature about family and housing issues was excellent. Fans like to feel close to their team, and you hit a home run with that article. As displaced fans, our lifeline is ChopTalk and MLB Extra Innings. We get no help from Midwest media. Thank you for a good product and for keeping the Braves family informed.

STEVE & PAT FLOWERS

Ashland, Missouri

SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

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Letters@ChopTalkonline.com

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WRITE THE BRAVES

Atlanta Braves
P.O. Box 4064
Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

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CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

BASEBALL AT THE WINTER OLYMPICS?

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

WHAT'S A BASEBALL executive doing in charge of the U.S. Winter Olympics team? Or, perhaps the question should be, "What's an Olympic speed skater doing in charge of business operations for the Braves?

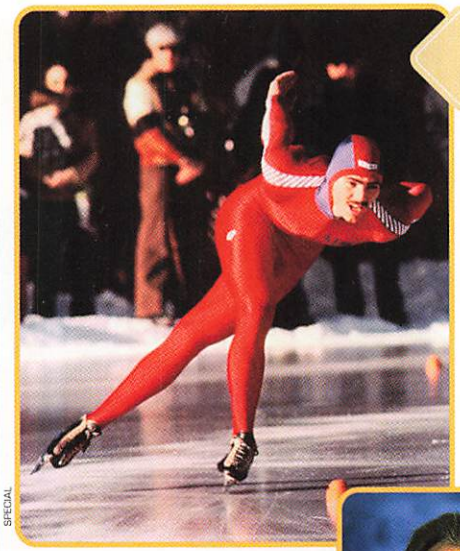
Both questions point to Mike Plant, the Braves' executive VP of business operations. And the answer is that Plant is an extremely talented man with unique background, skills and experience to handle both responsibilities.

In February, Plant was selected to serve as Chef de Mission, which is French for "Chief of Mission," for the United States Olympic delegation to the 2010 Winter Olympic Games to be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, Feb. 12-28.

A member of the 1980 U.S. men's speed skating team, Plant remained involved in the Olympic movement throughout his business career. His appointment marks the first time a former U.S. Winter Olympian has served as head of the delegation.

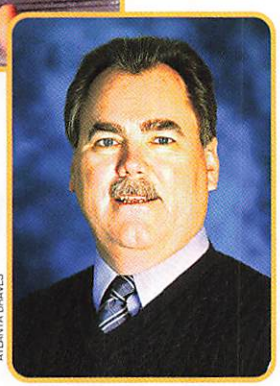
"It's like being the chairman of a major corporation that's going to a global conference," said Plant, 50. "I'll be overseeing the details that affect 400 to 500 people who are part of the delegation."

Plant will work in conjunction with the full-time U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) staff regarding myriad details from credentials to equipment, all of which will be worked out before athletes ever set foot in the Olympic village. And once the Games begin, he's the man who will handle any situation that might arise concerning the U.S. team, from security to official protests to athletes who might get out of line.



SPECIAL

A former Olympic speed skater and a six-time member of the U.S. World Championship team, Mike Plant has been head of business operations for the Braves since November 2003.



ATLANTA BRAVES

"The buck stops with me," he said.

Plant's impressive resume makes him a natural for the high profile position of chef - or chief.

"I've served in a lot of different capacities," said Plant. "I've been involved in the Olympics as an athlete, administrator of two different Olympic federations, on the USOC Executive Committee, and in sports business. I've got some good contacts."

He's also the only former Olympic athlete serving on the eight-member USOC board of directors.

Plant foresees little conflict between his Olympic duties and his responsibilities at Turner Field that include overseeing stadium operations, security, finance, merchandise, personnel, special events and the operation of minor league clubs.

His Atlanta Braves bosses recognize the passion he has for the Olympics and have given him leeway to be in Vancouver during most of February. As for this year's advance planning, Plant said, "At this point, I stay in touch (with the USOC) via telephone and e-mail. In October, there's a five-day meeting in Vancouver, which I've already told the folks I hope to miss! My priority is getting (the Braves) to the 'dance' (post-season)."

HAZARDS OF THE GAME

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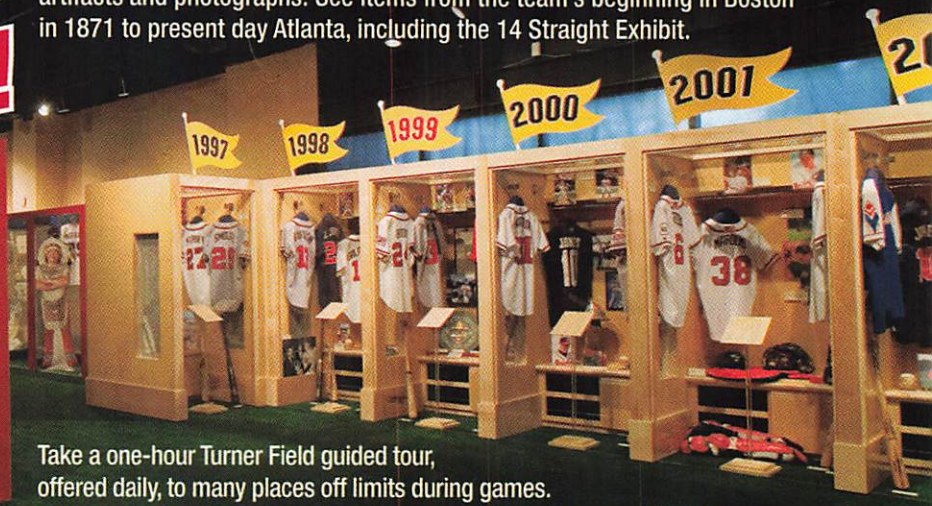

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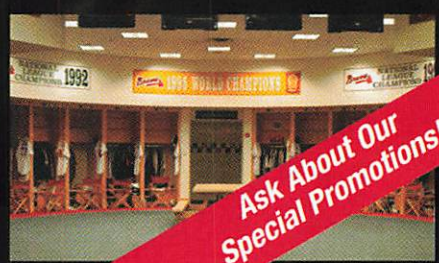

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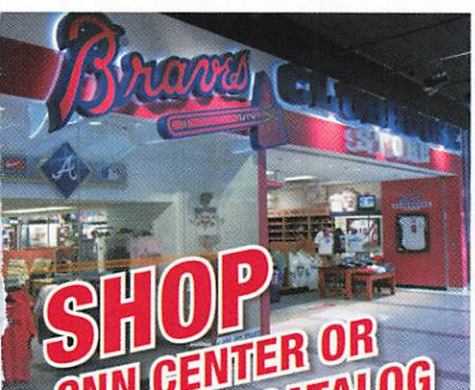

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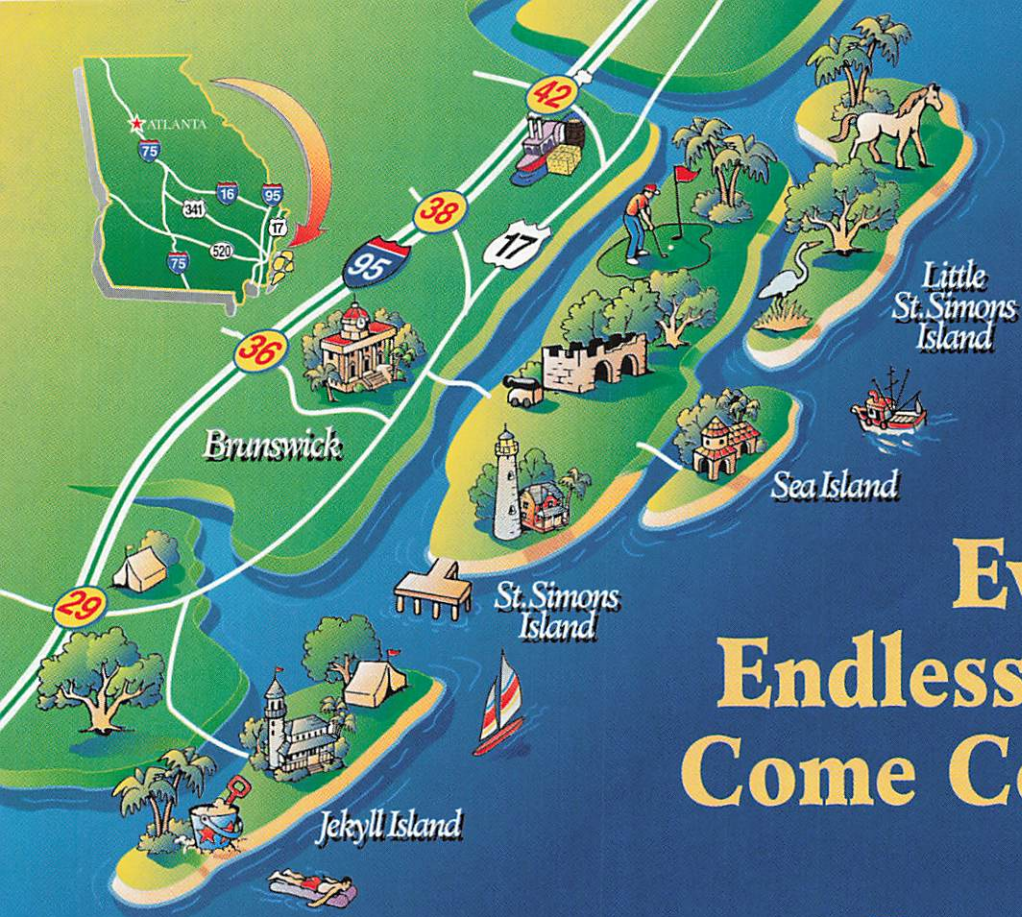

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